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ABSTRACT

The participation of Australia's indigenous peoples in vocational education and training (VET) and the outcomes of their participation were examined in a national study that involved four major data collection activities: investigation of statistics in the national VET collection and results of the Graduate Destination Survey; review of literature on performance indicators and determination of outcomes in VET; review of literature on factors contributing to indigenous students' success; and field studies that entailed interviewing managers, teachers, students, and others at 16 Technical and Further Education (TAFE) institutions. The study established that inequality between indigenous peoples and other Australians in access to and participation in VET has been eliminated. All TAFE institutes surveyed have embraced national and state/territory-level policies, and plans to improve indigenous VET and most TAFE institutions have established special indigenous organization structures; however, the areas of monitoring indigenous students' performance across institute programs and developing strategies to improve the outcomes students achieve or reduce students' rates of attrition have received relatively little attention. (The report contains 15 references and 61 tables/figures. Appended are the following: description of project methodology, literature review and 30 additional references, 29 tables of statistical data, and student survey results.) (MN)

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Creating a sense of place

Indigenous peoples in vocational education and training

CHRIS ROBINSON

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NCVER

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Creating a sense of place

Indigenous peoples in vocational education and training

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Paul Hughes AM

Professor Paul Hughes is director of the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research at the Flinders University of South Australia. He was chair of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force whose report in 1988 recommended the establishment of a national Aboriginal education policy. Paul was the chair of the National Aboriginal Education Consultative Committee (NAEC) which was the national source of Indigenous advice on education to the Commonwealth Government. Paul also chaired the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) Taskforce for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in 1985 which established the National Strategy to the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1996–2002.

Paul has been an Indigenous educator and head of Aboriginal education in South Australia for many years. In 1993 he was awarded the AM for a lifetime of service to Indigenous education.

Executive summary

The changing nature of Indigenous involvement in vocational education and training (VET) over the past decade or so is one of the most remarkable transformations ever seen in Australia's educational history.

VET providers, particularly Technical and Further Education institutes (TAFEs), have opened their doors to Indigenous peoples, albeit with varying degrees of enthusiasm and commitment. Indigenous peoples have responded. They are enrolling in VET course programs in record numbers, and they are staying in the programs and successfully completing them in greater numbers than ever before.

The growth in Indigenous peoples in VET has been enormous, from just a few thousand students in the 1980s to almost 45 000 in 1998. This represents just under 3% of the total number of VET students, yet Indigenous peoples are only around 2% of the total Australian population.

Inequality between Indigenous peoples and other Australians in access to, and participation in, VET has now been eliminated.

There can be no doubt that the efforts taken by TAFE institutes over the 1990s, which are the main providers of VET, to develop particular strategies, courses and institute-level arrangements to encourage Indigenous participation have had a major impact in contributing to the record levels of Indigenous participation that we have seen in recent years.

All TAFE institutes surveyed in this study have embraced national and State/Territory-level policies and plans to improve Indigenous VET and most TAFEs have established special Indigenous organisation structures, usually Aboriginal/Indigenous education units (AEUs) of some kind or another. Many institutes have also established special Indigenous advisory arrangements. According to our estimates based on the Australian Bureau of Statistics national census, Indigenous employment in VET has reached almost 2% of total VET employment. Around half of these staff are in special Indigenous education worker positions created in TAFE institutes.

This has amounted to a very major national effort to create an Indigenous presence or a sense of place for Indigenous people in Australian TAFE institutes. The importance of the arrangements put into place by successive Commonwealth and State/Territory governments under the National Indigenous Education Policy should not be underrated. They have been instrumental in bringing about the vastly improved situation for Indigenous peoples in VET. In particular, funds under the Indigenous Education Strategic Institutes Program (IESIP) has been critical in the funding of Indigenous education units and increased levels of Indigenous staffing within institutes.

However, there are still many issues that need to be addressed. Indigenous students are under-represented in many VET course areas that are of particular relevance to them, such as 'business, administration and economics', and they continue to be over-represented in other areas such as 'general (multi-field) education' courses and in lower level Certificate II programs.

Indigenous students experience lower pass rates and higher withdrawal and fail rates than other VET students on average, even though the gap has narrowed very considerably in recent years.

Most important of all, Indigenous peoples experience lower employment rates and higher unemployment rates after participating in a VET program than do other VET students. Nevertheless, successful VET outcomes do improve the employment prospects of Indigenous students, particularly in the overall conversion rate from part-time employment before and during the VET program into full-time employment following graduation.

This study shows that the special arrangements that TAFE institutes have put into place, through establishing Indigenous education units, are very largely focussed on providing specially designed Indigenous courses or Indigenous student support services. These arrangements mainly target a minority of the Indigenous students in TAFE institutes; that is, the 38.5% of all Indigenous students who are enrolled in a special Indigenous course.

Little or no attention has been given to monitoring the performance of Indigenous students across institute programs, and in developing strategies to improve the outcomes achieved and to reduce rates of attrition. Similarly the examples of trying to link VET delivery to employment outcomes in a direct way were few. Indigenous education units generally did not have clear plans to undertake these roles.

The overall conclusion from this study is that it is now time to move beyond the 'enclave' approach; that is, arrangements at the institute-level which focus only on special equity targets, special courses and special student support services. We need to now move to a range of much more robust institute-wide strategies that focus on the appropriate provision of the full offerings of VET courses and programs to Indigenous students and the development of particular strategies to improve the outcomes achieved by Indigenous students.

In summary a number of key points emerge from this study as requiring further consideration at the institute level. These include:

- re-thinking the role of Indigenous advisory structures, particularly with respect to greater representation of Indigenous TAFE students and graduates
- raising the proportion of Indigenous VET staff within teacher/trainer/instructor positions, and in management and planning roles
- the striking need for Indigenous education units to move beyond the 'enclave approach' to become actively involved in developing strategies to improve outcomes for all Indigenous students, given that the majority of Indigenous students are now in mainstream programs
- each institute needing to take particular steps to develop arrangements for the monitoring of Indigenous student performance, in particular to develop strategies for addressing poorer pass rates and higher attrition rates
- adopting a change in mindset in TAFE institutes and their Indigenous education structures to place very considerable importance on job outcomes

1 Introduction

A decade has now passed since Australia adopted the *National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander education policy* (known as the AEP). The policy was an agreement between national and State/Territory governments aimed at achieving equity between Indigenous and other Australians with respect to access, participation and outcomes in all forms of education and training.

The policy had its roots in responses by the governments of Australia to two key reviews in the 1980s. First was the review conducted in 1985 by the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training (1985) chaired by Mick Miller. The review identified the serious nature of educational disadvantage in Technical and Further Education (TAFE) for Indigenous peoples and the role that tertiary education could play in reducing or eliminating this disadvantage in cases where Indigenous peoples did gain post-secondary education and training qualifications. The second review was the review conducted by the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force (1988) chaired by Paul Hughes some three years later. The task force called for the 'Australian government to redress the severe economic inequality and social injustice faced by the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) Australians' (p.1) and confirmed that the disadvantages experienced by Aboriginal peoples in 'securing their right to education remain more severe than for any other group in Australian society' (p.1). This report called for the development of education policy targeted at improving the education and training for Indigenous youth.

As a result, in 1989 the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (AEP) was developed and endorsed by the prime minister and premiers of Australian governments and representatives of the Aboriginal community. This policy established 21 objectives aimed at achieving equitable outcomes for Indigenous peoples in terms of their participation and involvement in decision-making across all education and training sectors.

The development of the national policy is described in detail in Robinson and Bamblett (1998). The key objectives of the AEP with respect to the vocational education and training (VET) sector were:

- to ensure the proper involvement of Indigenous people in education decision-making, particularly through
  - the establishment of effective arrangements for the participation of Indigneous students and community members regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of post-school education services including those delivered by TAFE colleges
  - increasing the number of Indigenous people employed as administrators, teachers and student services officers in TAFE

- to achieve equality of access to educational services, including equitable access for Indigenous people to TAFE
- to achieve equality of educational participation of Indigenous people across all forms of post-compulsory education including in TAFE; and
- to attain equitable and appropriate education outcomes including Indigenous students gaining the graduation rates from award courses in TAFE as is achieved by other Australians (see the Commonwealth of Australia 1989)

In the VET sector the key element of the policy was to provide extra funding to TAFE institutes around Australia to increase the participation of Indigenous peoples in the full range of VET courses, programs and services, to establish arrangements for the involvement of Indigenous peoples in institute decision-making processes and to establish specific programs to support the social and learning needs of Indigenous students.

A number of key reports have since examined developments in the education and training sector for Indigenous peoples and have reaffirmed the goals and directions of the AEP.

In 1991, the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reaffirmed the need for governments to act further to ensure full implementation of the strategies that had been endorsed in the AEP policy. The connection between education and training and prevention of incarceration was given prominence by the Royal Commission.

The National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People (1994) found Indigenous peoples to have lower participation rates than other Australians. This was especially the case for secondary education. The review also found that they generally participated in 'particular and narrow fields' (p.2) in higher and technical and further education. They found that although more Indigenous peoples were involved in VET than ever before (which is consistent with trends within the general population), inequity of opportunities and outcomes were still a major concern. There have only been modest improvements in overcoming the disadvantage suffered by Aboriginal people in the employment market since the early 1990s and employment equity was still far from being achieved. They concluded that the role of education and training was the single most important factor in improving employment outcomes. The review reaffirmed the goals of the AEP.

In 1995 *A national strategy for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1996–2002* (MCEETYA 1995) was released. This strategy reaffirmed State and Territory governments' commitment to the AEP's objectives and identified best practice examples of innovative:

- methods of educational service delivery
- methods of institutional organisations
- administration arrangements which allow for self-determination in education

Currently the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) has been developing a new strategy, *Partners in a Learning Culture: Australia's National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1999–2003.* This strategy aims to build on the objectives and developments made in vocational education and training under

the AEP. ATSIPTAC reports to the Australian National Training Authority (ANTA).

The purpose of this study is to document the developments made in the provision of VET to Indigenous peoples and the achievements of Indigenous peoples in VET in order to provider a sound basis for developing future strategies.

2 Rationale and methodology of this study

2.1 Rationale

The rationale for this project is to examine the extent to which progress has been made in implementing the goals of the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy as they relate to vocational education and training. Specifically we are considering the extent to which:

- Indigenous peoples have equitable access to TAFE opportunities
- the participation of Indigenous peoples in TAFE is occurring at rates commensurate with those of all Australians
- Indigenous students are able to attain the same graduation rates from award courses in TAFE as other Australians
- effective arrangements have been made for the participation of Aboriginal students and community members in decisions regarding the planning, delivery and evaluation of VET for Indigenous peoples in TAFE institutes

It is about ten years since the AEP was first endorsed. It is now time to take stock of developments in order to see what changes in Indigenous VET participation and outcomes have been achieved. Moreover, it is important to try and determine what initiatives have been made within TAFE institutes to implement the objectives of the AEP, together with an examination of what impact, if any, they have had on improving VET for Indigenous peoples.

Most important of all, this study is aimed at ascertaining the extent to which TAFE institutes have created an environment which is welcoming, accommodating and involving of Indigenous peoples — an environment which can provide the best possible context for effective vocational learning.

The broader statistical analysis of the experiences of Indigenous peoples in VET covers the whole of the VET sector in Australia. The fieldwork pertaining to developments at the provider level is focussed on developments within TAFE institutes, TAFE being the main VET provider to Indigenous peoples.

A small but very significant provider of VET to Indigenous peoples is the Aboriginal community-controlled adult education sector. Developments there are the subject of a separate National Centre for Vocational Education Research (NCVER) report *Succeeding against the odds: The outcomes attained by Indigenous students in Aboriginal community-controlled adult education colleges* (Durnan & Boughton 1999).

2.2 Project methodology

The project was jointly sponsored by the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs (DETYA) and the NCVER. The project was undertaken by a consortium of consultants from the NCVER, and the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research at the Flinders University of South Australia. This consortium was specifically brought together for the purpose of this project and chosen for its existing strengths and experience in the educational issues facing Indigenous peoples, vocational education, and research and project management.

The methodology for this project is discussed in more detail in appendix 1. The project involved:

- analysis of national VET statistics from various sources
- consideration of research literature about Indigenous peoples in VET
- fieldwork in a sample of 16 of the 88 TAFE providers in Australia's VET sector

Most of the statistical data for the study was drawn from the national VET statistics supplied by TAFE institutes and other providers each year to the NCVER. Other national sources of data for the study were the NCVER's TAFE Graduate Destination Survey results, the NCVER's National Apprenticeship and Traineeship Statistics and the Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) Census of Population and Housing and ABS Indigenous surveys data. The published data sources drawn on for the study were:

- *Australian vocational education and training statistics 1998: In detail* (NCVER 1999a)
- *Australian vocational education and training: Indigenous students 1996 — An overview* (NCVER 1998a)
- *TAFE graduate destination survey 1998: National report* (NCVER 1998b)
- *Australian vocational education and training 1997: Commuter distances* (NCVER 1999b)
- *Employment outcomes for Indigenous Australians* (ABS 1996)

However, this study involved substantial analysis and publication of previously unpublished data about Indigenous students in VET in 1998.

Some data from earlier years has also been included.

A review of relevant research literature was carried out to identify factors that warranted further investigation in this study. A paper — *A review of research about Indigenous peoples in VET*— by Jennifer Gibb is presented in full in appendix 2 of the report.

Statistical analysis was undertaken by the NCVER, which is Australia's national vocational education research and statistics organisation. Within the consortium NCVER was also responsible for contractual obligations, financial arrangements with the project group, analysis of available data and overall project management.

The fieldwork in TAFE institutes was funded by DETYA and organised and carried out by the Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research. The Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research provides an expert and specialist point of contact on Indigenous matters within the Flinders University of South Australia. Besides undertaking

research, it represents and assists Indigenous peoples in the external community wishing to gain access to, and succeed in, higher education.

In this project, Yunggorendi undertook the principal role of dealing with Indigenous staff and students in the VET institutes. Yunggorendi managed and conducted the case studies in this project using its staff or other Indigenous people engaged locally.

The fieldwork in the 16 TAFE institutes chosen for this study included:

- interviews with managers, teachers and staff in Indigenous education units
- interviews with other staff in TAFE institutes
- interviews and focus groups with students
- a student questionnaire
- interviews and a questionnaire for TAFE institute management
- interviews with course advisory groups and other prominent local Indigenous groups

3 Indigenous participation in vocational education and training

3.1 The growth in Indigenous participation

Australia's record in providing adequate education and training opportunities to Indigenous peoples was very poor up until the late 1980s.

Robinson and Bamblett (1998) reported that:

> *In 1969 there were fewer than 100 Indigenous people enrolled in any kind of formal tertiary, higher education or university course anywhere in Australia* (p.2).

Even by the mid-1980s Indigenous participation in VET remained hugely inequitable. The 1986 ABS Census of Population and Housing figures showed there were only about 3300 Indigenous students in TAFE colleges. They comprised only 0.3% of the total student body at a time when the same census showed that Indigenous peoples were 1.5% of the Australian population in 1986 (see Robinson & Bamblett 1998, p.3).

However, by 1990 there had been a very considerable increase in Indigenous participation in VET, and since then there has been almost a threefold increase in the number of Indigenous peoples participating in recognised vocational education and training in Australia. There were an estimated 15 000 Indigenous VET students in 1990 (table 1). They made up just 1.6% of the total number of VET students in Australia. In 1998 that number had risen to nearly 45 000 students—which is almost 3% of the total student body.

Table 1: The number of Indigenous students in VET, 1990–1998

Year	No. of students		Indigenous as a proportion of all students
	Indigenous ('000)	All students ('000)	(%)
1990	15.1[a]	966.8	1.6[a]
1991	17.4[a]	985.9	1.8[a]
1992	19.8[a]	1042.5	1.9[a]
1993	20.6	1121.4	1.8
1994	22.9	1131.5	2.0
1995	26.1	1272.7	2.1
1996	32.3	1347.4	2.4
1997	39.0	1458.6	2.7
1998	44.8	1535.2	2.9

(a) Numbers of Indigenous VET students were not available for NSW prior to 1994. These figures include an estimate based on 2% of the total number of VET students in NSW. Figures for Queensland in 1990 were also unavailable, so an estimate of 2% of the total number of VET students in Queensland in that year has been used.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The situation has changed from one of severe inequality between Indigenous students and other Australians with respect to access to and participation in VET, to one where equality in participation was reached by 1994. By equality in participation we mean that the proportion of VET students who are Indigenous reached a level commensurate with the proportion of Indigenous peoples in the total Australian population, which is around 2%.

Indigenous participation reached 2.9% of the national student body in VET in 1998, a level which significantly exceeds the proportion of Indigenous peoples in the total population of Australia.

The inequality between Indigenous peoples and other Australians with respect to access to and participation in VET in Australia has now been eliminated.

This trend is not due to any significant decrease in the proportions of VET students who do not report whether or not they are an Indigenous person. For instance, the 'not stated' category was 21.7% in 1994 and 21.2% in 1998. The NCVER considers that most, if not nearly all, Indigenous students in VET are actually identifying themselves as Indigenous peoples.

This very substantial improvement has occurred across all age groups of Indigenous peoples. If we consider the age participation in VET in table 2, we can see the extent of the improvement that occurred in just ten years between 1986 and 1996.

Table 2: VET participation rates, by age group 1986 and 1996

	Indigenous peoples (%)		All Australians (%)	
Age groups	**1986**	**1996**	**1986**	**1996**
16–17 years	4.8	23.4	19.4	19.9
18–20 years	4.0	22.5	22.7	27.5
21–24 years	2.6	17.1	11.8	16.4
25 years and over	1.6	12.6	5.7[a]	8.2[a]

(a) For the 25–64-year age group

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics Census of Population and Housing and the National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The participation rate of 16–17-year old Indigenous peoples increased massively from 4.8% to 23.4% of the total Indigenous teenage population, to now be significantly higher than the corresponding participation in VET of all Australians aged 16–17 years of around 20%.

The participation rate of 18–20-year old Indigenous peoples has increased by a massive amount in the decade to 1996, from just 4.0% in 1986 to 22.5% by 1996. However, in this case the corresponding national VET participation rate for 18–20-year olds is higher again at 27.5%.

The VET participation rate of 21–24-year old Indigenous peoples was only 2.6% in 1986 but rose massively to 17.1% by 1996. Again, this rate exceeded that for all persons aged 21–24 years in Australia by 1996.

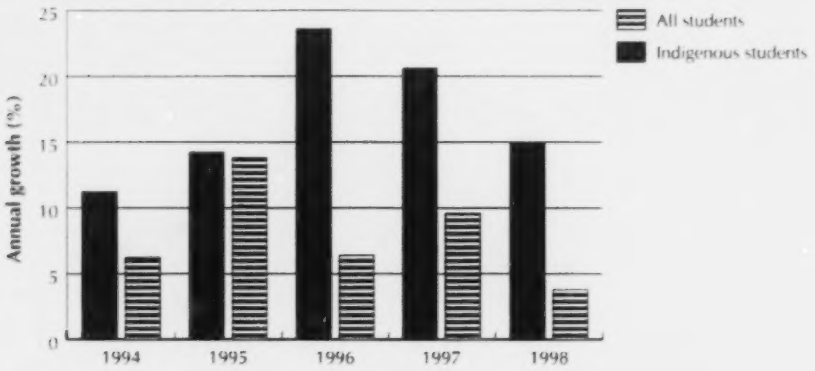
A similar picture of growth is apparent when we consider the changes in the participation of Indigenous persons aged 25 years or more. Participation in VET

by Indigenous peoples aged 25 years or more rose from only 1.6% in 1986 to a staggering 12.6% by 1996. This rate far outweighs the national VET participation rate of 8.2% for all Australians aged over 25 years.

Thus the elimination of inequity between Indigenous peoples and other Australians has occurred across all age groups. In fact, for those aged 16–17 years or 21 years and over, the participation rates of Indigenous peoples in VET exceed those of other Australians in the same age cohorts. It is only 18–20-year olds where Indigenous participation remained below the national average by 1996. Even here the differences between Indigenous peoples and all Australians are not that great, and the gap has narrowed very significantly over the past ten years.

This remarkable trend has been achieved through very high rates of annual growth in the numbers of Indigenous VET students during the early 1990s (shown in figure 1), compared with overall growth in the VET sector.

Figure 1: Annual growth in the number of Indigenous students in VET, 1994–1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The growth in the number of Indigenous students in VET has been strong throughout the 1990s, with the numbers having nearly doubled since the mid-1990s.

Over the past three years very high rates of growth were recorded in Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. Growth rates of well in excess of 10% per year were also recorded in New South Wales, Victoria and Tasmania, as can be seen in table 3.

This is very heartening because the highest rates of growth have tended to be in those States and Territories that have the bulk of Australia's Indigenous population within their borders.

Growth rates for Indigenous students have greatly exceeded those for the growth of all VET students in all jurisdictions of Australia, except in South Australia. South Australia had a disappointing growth rate in the number of Indigenous students in recent years, with only 3.2% per year. To be fair, however, South Australia did achieve much higher growth rates than most other States and Territories between 1990 and 1995. Since then, however, the situation in South Australia has remained relatively stable.

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Table 3: Indigenous VET participation and growth in each State and Territory

State/Territory	No. of Indigenous students 1998 ('000)	Proportion of national total of Indigenous students 1998 (%)	Annual average growth 1995–1998	
			Indigenous students (%)	All students (%)
NSW	13.3	29.7	13.3	4.6
Qld	12.1	27.0	48.9	11.2
WA	6.2	13.8	25.8	1.8
NT	5.7	12.7	38.8	21.9
Vic.	3.9	8.7	17.6	5.8
SA	2.6	5.8	3.2	17.0
Tas.	0.8	1.8	19.4	11.2
ACT	0.2	0.5	1.9	-0.5
Australia	44.8	100.0	23.7	7.0

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Further statistical information about the number of Indigenous students in VET is given in appendix 3, table 1a.

3.2 The characteristics of Indigenous students

Gender

Of the 44 800 Indigenous students in VET in 1998 almost 53%, or 23 700, of them were male as shown in table 4. The gender balance amongst the whole VET student body was also slightly skewed in favour of males, with just under 52% of all Australian VET students being male.

Table 4: The gender of Indigenous students and all students, 1998

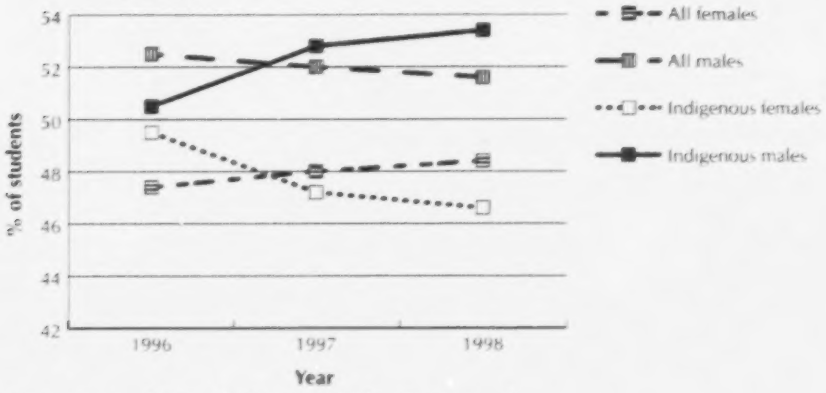
Gender[a]	Indigenous students		All students	
	Number ('000)	Proportion (%)	Number ('000)	Proportion (%)
Males	23.7	52.8	792.2	51.6
Females	21.1	47.2	743.0	48.4
All persons	44.8	100.0	1535.2	100.0

(a) The gender 'not known' category has been apportioned proportionately amongst males and females

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

A more revealing pattern is shown in figure 2. Over the past three years the gender balance amongst all Australian VET students has been converging with steady growth in the proportion of females. A continuation of current trends will eventually result in a 50:50 split between males and females in the VET sector as a whole. However, the opposite trend is apparent amongst Indigenous students. Although the actual numbers of Indigenous males and females have both been growing strongly in recent years, the proportion of Indigenous VET students who are male has risen from just over 50% in 1996 to 53.4% in 1998. There has been a corresponding drop in the proportion of Indigenous VET students who are female.

Figure 2: Trends in the gender balance amongst Indigenous students and all students, 1996–1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Age

The age structure of the Indigenous VET student population has changed dramatically in recent years with very strong rates of growth across all age groups as shown in table 5.

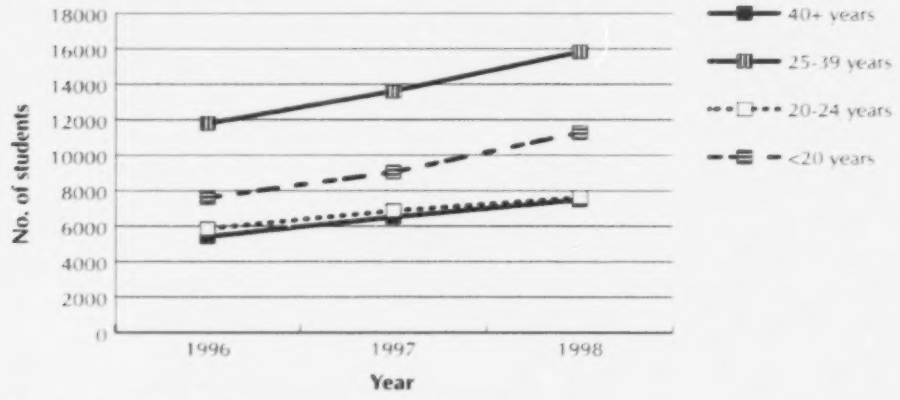
Table 5: Annual growth rates in Indigenous students by age, 1996–1998

Age group	Annual growth rate 1996–1998 (%)
Less than 20 years	24.1
20–24 years	15.0
25–39 years	17.0
40 years or more	19.1

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The growth has been particularly strong amongst the teenage Indigenous population, with growth rates of almost 25% per year in recent years. This trend is depicted in figure 3.

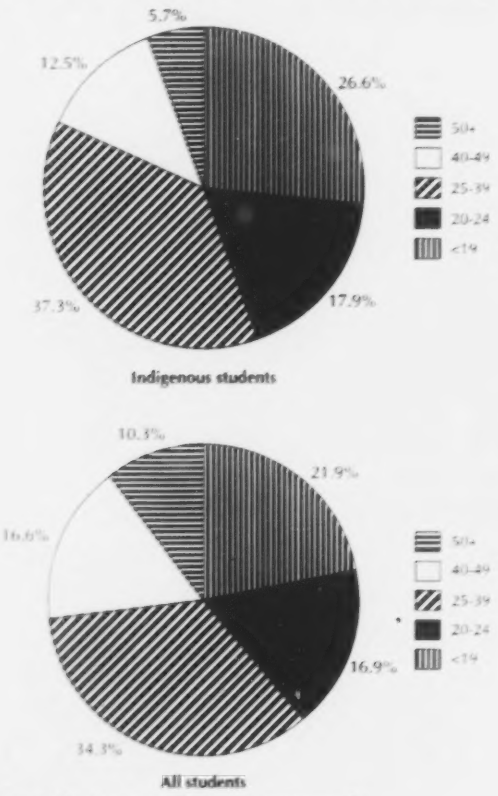
Figure 3: Trends in Indigenous student numbers by age, 1996–1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Notwithstanding the very positive trend of teenage growth in Indigenous participation in VET, Indigenous people aged 25–39 years are the largest group of participants, some 37% of the total, as shown in figure 4. Teenagers are next with almost 27% of the total number of Indigenous VET participants, with almost 18% being young adults aged 20–24 years.

Figure 4: Age structure of Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

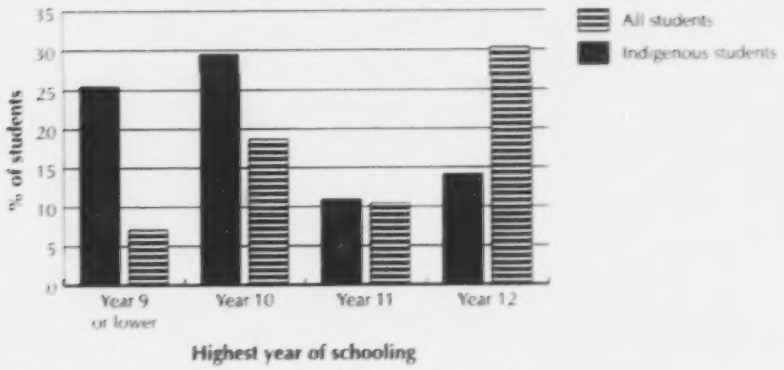
A really interesting feature about the comparison in the age structure of the Indigenous and total VET student body is the similarity in the respective age structures, also shown in figure 4. The Indigenous VET student population has proportionally slightly more younger people in VET and slightly fewer older students than does the whole VET student population. This pattern reflects differences in age structure of the populations in general of Indigenous peoples and other Australians.

The remarkable thing about these trends is that, until recently, one of the most pressing concerns about Indigenous participation in VET was that participation amongst young Indigenous peoples, especially school leavers, was at an alarmingly low rate. In a decade, this has turned around so that the numbers of young Indigenous peoples (aged 15–24 years) participating in VET is now proportionally higher than for all young Australians.

Educational background

Turning to the education background of Indigenous students, we can see in figure 5 that Indigenous students are more than three times more likely to come to VET with only Year 9 or lower levels of schooling, compared with the student body as a whole. Conversely, Indigenous students are only half as likely to enter VET with Year 12 schooling than other students. Encouragingly, the proportions of Indigenous students entering VET with Year 11 are now around the national average.

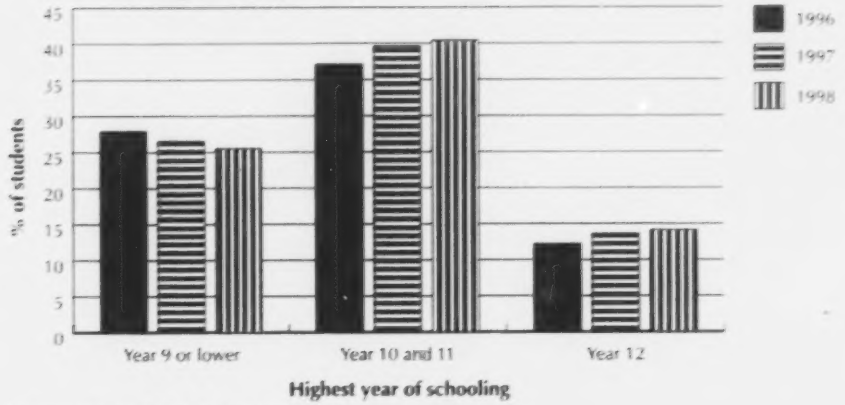
Figure 5: Highest year of schooling prior to entering VET, Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

While inequities in the education background, with respect to the level of schooling attained, still exist between Indigenous peoples and other Australians, it is clear that the gap has narrowed in recent years amongst those participating in VET. A pattern of steadily increasing proportions of Indigenous VET students with Years 10 and 11 or even Year 12 schooling is evident since 1996, as shown in figure 6. The proportion with only Year 9 or lower levels of schooling has been steadily declining since 1996.

Figure 6: Trends in the highest year of schooling attained by Indigenous students prior to entering VET, 1996–1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Another encouraging sign is that the proportion of Indigenous peoples in VET who had previously completed some type of post-secondary qualification has almost doubled from 10.8% to 20.3% since 1996, as shown in figure 7. Of course, the corresponding proportion amongst the whole VET student body has also grown strongly from just under 17% to almost 29% over the same period.

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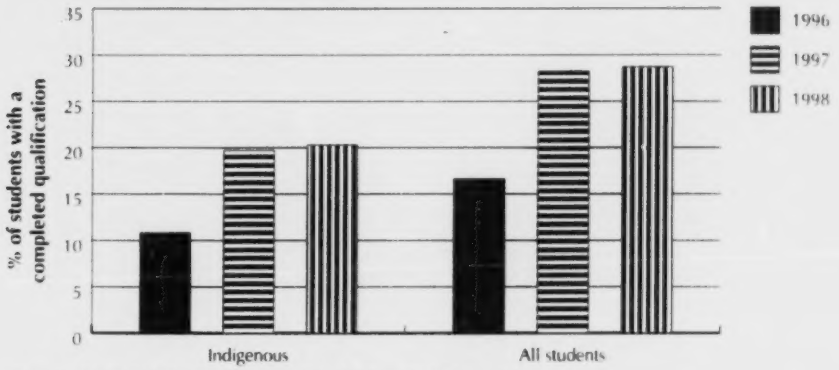
Figure 7: The proportion of Indigenous students and all students with a completed qualification, 1996–1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

In terms of the proportions of Indigenous students and all students who held qualifications prior to 1998, Indigenous students are less likely (but only slightly less likely) to hold prior trade qualifications, a Diploma or an Associate Diploma. They are, however, much less likely to hold a prior Degree or post-graduate (i.e. university) qualification or an advanced technician certificate. Conversely, Indigenous VET students are more likely to have another certificate (i.e. lower level certificate) than other Australian VET students.

Table 6: The qualifications completed by Indigenous students and all students prior to 1998

Prior qualification completed	Indigenous students (%)	All students (%)
Trade certificate	18.6	21.9
Advanced technician certificate	4.1	7.3
Other certificate	50.3	33.0
Associate Diploma	6.2	8.0
Undergraduate Diploma	2.4	3.8
Degree/post-graduate Diploma	6.3	15.3
Unspecified qualification	12.0	10.6
Total with qualification	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Employment background

From table 7 we can see that some 46% of Indigenous VET students in 1997 were employed whilst undertaking their studies. This is a significantly higher rate of employment than in the Aboriginal community as a whole where only 36% of persons aged 15 years and over are employed (see ABS 1996).

Table 7: Employment and labour force status of Indigenous VET students, 1997

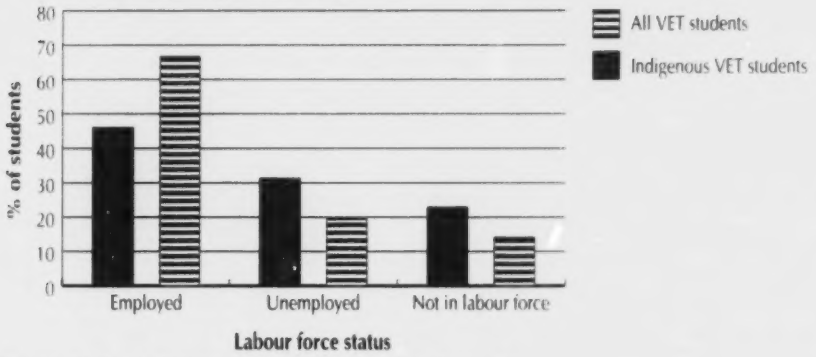
Labour force status	Number of students ('000)	Indigenous students (%)
Employed	14.1	46.0
Unemployed	9.6	31.2
Sub-total in labour force	23.7	77.2
Not in labour force	7.0	22.8
Total status unknown	30.7	100.0
Labour force status unknown	7.8	–
Total VET students	**38.5**	–

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

A further 31% of Indigenous VET students were unemployed and seeking employment, bringing the total labour force participation rate amongst VET Indigenous students to 77%. This exceeds both the national Indigenous labour force participation rate and the Australian national labour force participation rate, indicating a very high degree of labour force attachment amongst Indigenous VET students.

Significant inequalities still exist between Indigenous VET students and other VET students with respect to access to employment, as shown in figure 8.

Figure 8: The labour force status of Indigenous students and all students whilst undertaking VET, 1997



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Two-thirds of all VET students had employment of some kind whilst studying during 1998. For Indigenous VET students the employment rate was below 50%, being some 46% in 1998. Consequently the unemployment rate amongst VET students, that is VET students who were also available for and actively seeking work, was just over 30% compared to a national unemployment rate for all VET students of just under 20%.

Indigenous VET students also had a greater proportion not in the labour force and not seeking employment whilst studying in VET. Typically these are full-time VET students. The portions not in the labour force were almost 23% for Indigenous students and some 14% for all VET students.

Regional and geographic location

Over 88% of Indigenous peoples reside in New South Wales, Queensland, Western Australia and the Northern Territory. As shown in table 8, over 80% of Indigenous VET students reside in those States and Territories as well.

If we compare the national distribution of Indigenous VET students across States and Territories with the national distribution of the whole Indigenous population across States and Territories (table 8), we can see New South Wales and Victoria have slightly greater shares of Indigenous students than their shares of the Indigenous population. Queensland and South Australia have the same shares of both Indigenous students and Indigenous population. Western Australia and the Northern Territory are close to being in balance but their Indigenous VET student populations are slightly lower than their share of the national Indigenous population, and Tasmania and the Australian Capital Territory are lower again.

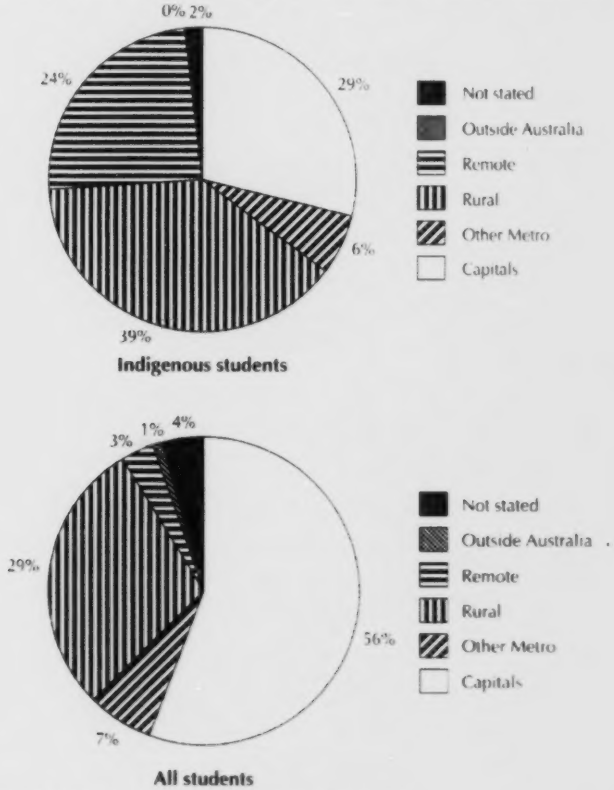
Table 8: State and Territory of Indigenous students

Indicator	NSW	Qld	WA	NT	Vic.	SA	Tas.	ACT	Australia
No. of Indigenous Australians 1996 ('000)	101.5	95.5	50.8	46.3	21.5	20.5	13.9	2.9	352.9
Proportion of total Indigenous population 1996 (%)	28.8	27.1	14.4	13.1	6.1	5.8	3.9	0.8	100.0
Indigenous peoples as a proportion of the total population 1996 (%)	1.7	2.9	3.0	24.4	0.5	1.4	3.0	1.0	2.0
VET students 1998 ('000)	13.3	12.1	6.2	5.7	3.9	2.6	0.8	0.2	44.8
Proportion of total Indigenous VET students (%)	29.7	27.0	13.8	12.7	8.7	5.8	1.8	0.5	100.0
Indigenous VET participation rates (%)	13.1	12.7	12.2	12.3	18.1	12.7	5.8	6.9	12.7

Sources: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census of Population and Housing and 1998 national VET statistics from the National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Even more important is the geographic dispersion of the Indigenous VET student population away from capital cities and more towards rural and remote Australia. As shown in figure 9, less than 30% of Indigenous students are in capital cities, compared with some 56% of all VET students in Australia being in the capitals.

Figure 9: Geographic region of Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Similar proportions (i.e. around 6%) reside in other metropolitan areas of 100 000 or more that are not capital cities. Significantly more Indigenous students, 39% compared with 29% for all students, reside in rural areas (with a population of

50 000 – 99 000). When we consider the remote areas of Australia with populations of less than 5000, we see that Indigenous VET students are some seven times more likely to be remote area dwellers.

This concentration of Indigenous VET students in rural and remote Australia has made the trend of massive growth in Indigenous student numbers over the past decade even more remarkable. VET providers, especially TAFE providers and specialist Aboriginal institutes, have made considerable efforts to improve access for Indigenous remote area dwellers.

The concentration of Indigenous VET students in rural and remote Australia has a significant impact on the commuting distances Indigenous students undertake to attend training. NCVER (1999b, p.16) found that:

> *The medium distance of Indigenous students from their training providers was 15.5 kilometres which is about 35% greater than the medium distance for non-Indigenous students (11.4 kilometres).*
>
> *23.6% of Indigenous students lived more than 100 kilometres from their training providers which contrasts to non-Indigenous students for whom the same figure is 8.5%. For students living more than 500 kilometres from their training providers the same figures are 9.7% and 2.0% respectively.*

There is also an increasing trend for Indigenous students to attend classroom-based vocational education and training that is directed by trainers who travel to remote Indigenous communities to provide the training on-site.

Further statistical information about the characteristics of Indigenous VET students is given in appendix 3, tables 2a–9a.

3.3 The nature of training undertaken by Indigenous students

The amount of training

The indicators shown in table 9 suggest that Indigenous students are in fact enrolling in, and commencing in, greater amounts of vocational education training than are other VET students on average.

Table 9: Indicators of the amount of training undertaken by Indigenous students

Indicators	Indigenous students	All students
No. of module enrolments 1998 ('000)	375.0	10706.1
Proportion of module enrolments 1998 (%)	3.5	100.0
Enrolling in 10–15 modules 1997 (%)	12.0	8.0
Enrolling in 16 or more modules 1997 (%)	17.0	11.0
Average hours of training enrolled in 1997 (hours)	302.0	207.0

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

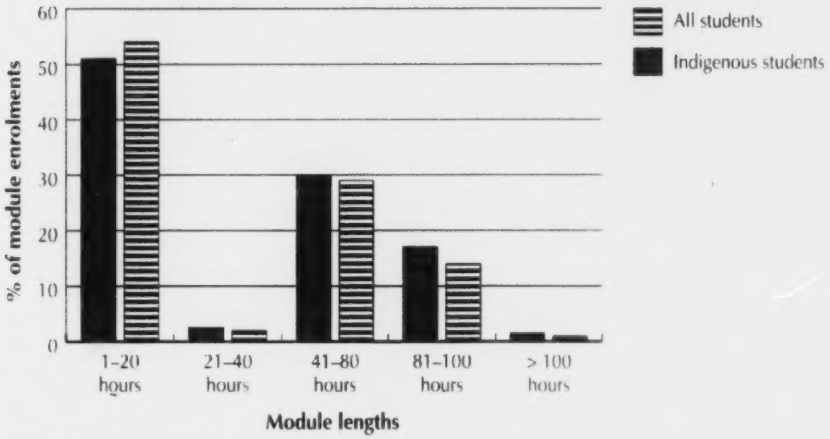
The total number of module enrolments by Indigenous students in 1998 amounted to 3.5% of all module enrolments, even though Indigenous students made up only 2.9% of the total VET student population in that year. Table 9 also

shows that the numbers of Indigenous students enrolling in ten or more modules is very much higher than for all VET students.

Similarly, Indigenous students on average enrolled in VET programs totalling some 300 hours in 1997, noting that the national average is only 200 hours.

This pattern is depicted very clearly in figure 10. Indigenous students are slightly less likely than other students to enrol in modules of less than 20 hours, and are more likely to enrol in the modules of greatest length.

Figure 10: The intensity of module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The type of training

The VET programs undertaken by students can be classified into two types of courses:

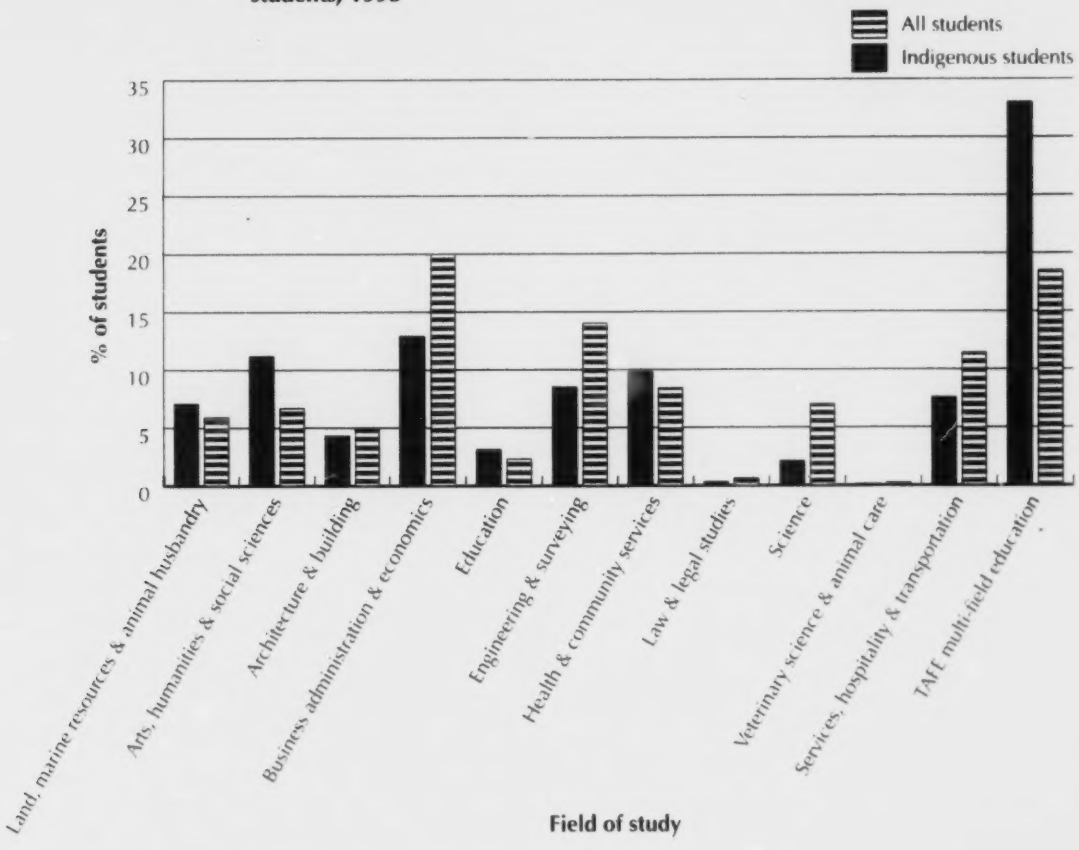
- the field of study based on the main area of contact of the course
- the stream of study based on the occupational stream classification for which the course is intended to skill people for

The field of study courses enrolled in by Indigenous students and all students is shown in figure 11. Indigenous students are very significantly under-represented across courses in:

- business, administration and economics
- engineering and surveying
- services, hospitality and tourism
- science

This is a serious problem given the importance of the services, tourism and hospitality industries to Indigenous communities, and given the need for more business and economic development to secure a better economic future in Aboriginal communities across Australia.

Figure 11: Field of study of courses enrolled in by Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Indigenous students are also slightly under-represented in the architecture and building, law and legal studies, and veterinary science areas.

The major areas of over-representation by Indigenous students are in:

- TAFE multi-field education
- Arts, humanities and social sciences

TAFE multi-field education comprises TAFE courses providing general education at a senior secondary level but within TAFE, basic functional skills in specific areas or technical skills which span a number of the broader fields of the VET field of study classification (figure 11). Specifically, the TAFE multi-field education categories cover:

- TAFE courses which develop a range of skills and knowledge but which span a number of broad fields in the VET field of study classification
- pre-vocational/pre-employment courses which develop a range of skills relevant to subsequent enrolment in VET programs and further education and training, or for employment mainly requiring basic skills
- TAFE programs designed to improve literacy and numeracy skills such as functional English literacy programs, numeracy programs and English as a second language programs

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- TAFE programs which provide education in a range of senior secondary subjects, but within the TAFE setting to enable individuals to gain entry to further education and training or higher education
- general skills development programs which focus on a range of personal, interpersonal, communications and technical skills
- in some cases, school–tertiary education link courses which provide information to school students about tertiary education

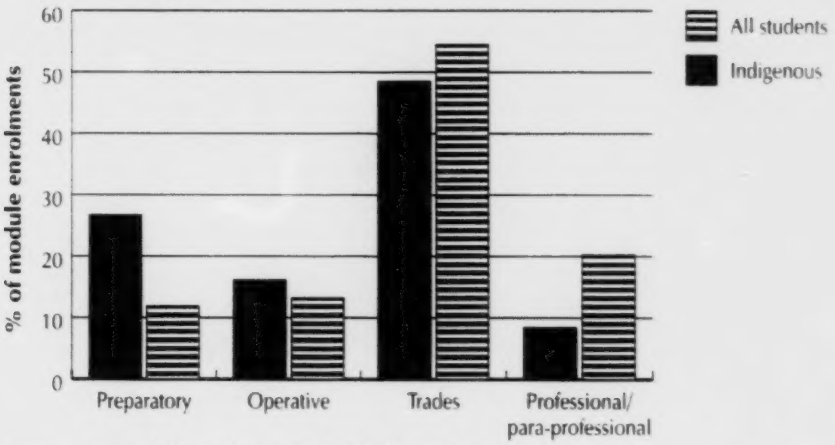
These courses are popular with Indigenous students because many of them have had poorer schooling and other education backgrounds prior to their entry to VET.

Indigenous students are also slightly over-represented in land and marine resources and animal husbandry, education and health and community services categories of VET. These trends are consistent with the importance of land and marine environments to Indigenous peoples. They are also in line with the high level of education, health, community and social service provisions undertaken by Indigenous peoples in their communities. If anything, it might be expected that the representation of Indigenous peoples in these areas might be even higher in the future than they have been to date.

Another way of classifying the type of training undertaken is to examine the stream of study. The stream of study classifies the VET undertaken according to the broad occupational classification to which the training is oriented. The four categories are:

- *Preparatory* level which covers programs geared towards preparation for entry to employment of further education streams
- *Operative* level which covers a range of skills at the sub-trades level
- *Trades skill* level or equivalent includes both recognised trade courses or other skilled and technician courses
- *Para-professional and professional* level covers streams beyond the trade/technician/supervisory level and can involve a variety of specialist functions

Figure 12: The module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students by stream of study, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Indigenous students are more than twice as likely as VET students generally to be enrolled in modules at the preparatory level.

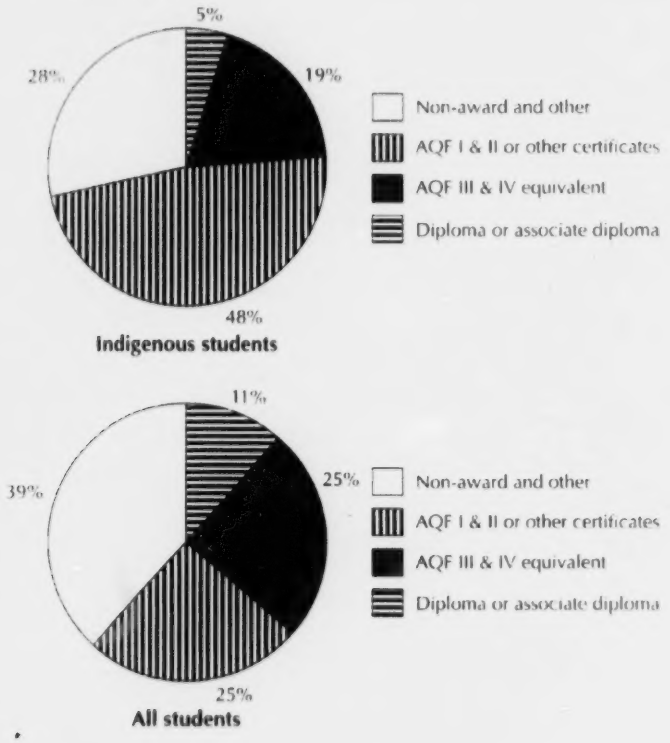
The proportions of Indigenous enrolments in modules at the operative level and trades level, although still different to the national averages, are now very much closer to the national levels of module enrolments in these areas. However, Indigenous students are still slightly over-represented in operative level modules, and are slightly under-represented at the trades level.

Finally, Indigenous students are less than half as likely as VET students generally to be enrolled in modules at the professional and para-professional level.

The level of training program undertaken

Indigenous students are less than half as likely to enrol in a Diploma or Associate Diploma level program when compared with the level of program enrolled in by all VET students in Australia. This is shown in figure 13. These programs include Diplomas and Associate Diplomas awarded under the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF), as well as other VET Diploma or Advanced Diploma-level programs.

Figure 13: The level of VET program enrolled in by Indigenous students and all students, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Indigenous participation in Certificate III and IV level programs (which include advanced certificates and trade certificates) is also lower (just under 20%) than for the sector as a whole (25%).

However, Indigenous enrolments in AQF Certificate I and II level programs, and in other certificate programs, are at much higher levels than for all students.

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Almost half of all Indigenous students are enrolled in such programs, compared to only a quarter of all students.

The reason for this difference is partly explained by the fact that non-Indigenous enrolments in higher level programs are higher than for Indigenous peoples. A more important factor is that fewer Indigenous students are enrolled in non-award or sub-qualification-level programs (Statements of Attainment etc.). Only 28% of Indigenous students were not enrolled in programs leading directly to a qualification, compared with 39% in the VET sector overall.

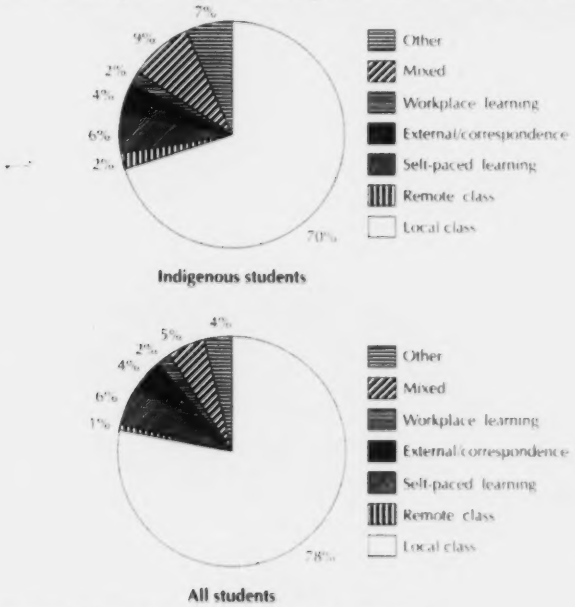
The mode of training delivery

Indigenous VET students are less likely than other VET students to undertake their training in the standard classroom situation. As shown in figure 14, some 70% of VET is provided to Indigenous students through the local classroom. The corresponding figure for all students was 78%. On the other hand Indigenous students are nearly three times more likely to attend a remote classroom situation where a trainer travels to an off-site location to provide remote classroom-based instruction. Nevertheless this still only accounts for some 2.3% of the total delivery to Indigenous VET students.

The proportions of Indigenous students and all students involved in self-paced learning and external/correspondence forms of delivery are similar, as are the proportions involved in formal workplace-based learning. However, Indigenous students are much more likely to be learning through a mixture of delivery strategies (9.3%) than are VET students overall (5.3%).

More detailed information about the nature of training undertaken is given in appendix 3, tables 10a–17a.

Figure 14: Delivery strategies to Indigenous students and all students



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

3.4 The providers of VET to Indigenous students

Most Indigenous students undertaking VET do so at a TAFE institute (or another public VET provider) as shown in table 10. However, this proportion has fallen from 88.2% to 80.5% in just a two-year period between 1996 and 1998.

Table 10: The type of providers of VET to Indigenous students and all students

Type of provider	Proportion of students (%)		
	Indigenous students 1996	Indigenous students 1998	All students 1998
TAFE and other government	88.2	80.5	75.0
Community education providers	3.0	4.7	15.2
Other registered training providers	8.8	14.9	9.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 10 also shows that a greater proportion of Indigenous VET students attend TAFE than do all students. Indigenous students are also much more likely than other VET students to undertake a VET program with private training providers and other registered training providers. Adult and community education providers have a relatively poor record in providing VET to Indigenous peoples.

If we consider the distribution of Indigenous students amongst TAFE providers we can see that over half of all TAFE institutes have fewer than 250 Indigenous students enrolled (table 11).

Table 11: The distribution of Indigenous students amongst TAFE providers, 1998

Parameter	No. of TAFE providers	Proportion of TAFE providers (%)
Indigenous student enrolments		
Less than 100 students	22	25.0
100–249 students	25	28.4
250–499 students	14	16.0
500–749 students	6	6.8
750–999 students	13	14.8
1000 students or more	8	9.0
Total	**88**	**100.0**
Indigenous students as a proportion of all students		
Less than 10%	17	19.3
1.0%–1.9%	21	23.9
2.0%–2.9%	14	15.9
3.0%–4.9%	6	6.8
5.0%–9.9%	14	15.9
10% or more	16	18.2
Total	**88**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

However, at the other end of the spectrum some 30% of TAFE institutes have at least 500 Indigenous students each, and almost 10% of TAFE institutes now enrol at least 1000 Indigenous students each year. In fact the top ten TAFE institutes, in terms of having the most Indigenous students, enrol some 40% of the total number of Indigenous students in Australia.

Looking at the dispersion of Indigenous students as a proportion of all students in each TAFE, over one-third of all TAFEs have at least 5% of their total student body now being Indigenous students. At the other end of the scale, in over 40% of TAFEs Indigenous enrolments are less than 2% of total enrolments.

Further details are given in appendix 3, table 18a.

4 Apprentice and trainee participation by Indigenous peoples

4.1 Total Indigenous participation in apprenticeships and traineeships

Some of the VET participation of Indigenous peoples we have considered so far in this report is in new apprenticeships; that is, an individual in a contract of training with an employer as an apprentice or a trainee.

This training, typically, involves training in the workplace together with some off-the-job training. The major provider of off-the-job training to apprentices and trainees is TAFE, although the importance of other registered training providers has increased in recent years.

The incidence and patterns of Indigenous participation in apprenticeships and traineeships is considered below.

Over 4000 Indigenous peoples commenced in a new apprenticeship contract of training as an apprentice or trainee in 1998. As shown in table 12, there were nearly 148 000 apprentice and trainee commencements nationally in 1998, meaning that Indigenous commencements amounted to 2.9% of all commencements nationally.

Table 12: The number of apprentice and trainee commencements by Indigenous peoples and all people in 1998

Gender	The no. commencing in an apprenticeship or traineeship		Indigenous as a proportion of the total (%)
	Indigenous ('000)	All people ('000)	
Males	2.5	86.8	2.9
Females	1.8	61.0	2.9
Persons	4.3	147.8	2.9

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

This means that Indigenous peoples are now commencing as apprentices and trainees in a contract of training with employers at a rate that is significantly higher than their proportion in the total Australian population (remembering that Indigenous peoples make up around 2% of the total Australian population).

Turning to the total number of apprentices and trainees, we can see from table 13 that there were some 220 000 apprentices and trainees in 1998, of which some 4200 were Indigenous. This means that Indigenous apprentices and trainees were some 1.9% of the total. This represents a level of participation in contracts of training with employers by Indigenous peoples that is commensurate with their numbers in the total Australian population.

Table 13: The number of Indigenous and total apprentices and trainees, 1998

Gender	The no. in a contract of training		Indigenous as a proportion of the total (%)
	Indigenous ('000)	All contracts of training ('000)	
Males	2.7	155.3	1.7
Females	1.5	64.5	2.3
Persons	4.2	219.8	1.9

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

These patterns mean that overall equity in participation in apprenticeships and traineeships between Indigenous and other Australians has now just been reached in Australia. This is a remarkable turn-around from the dismal level of apprenticeship and traineeship opportunities that were available to Indigenous peoples a decade or more ago.

The interesting thing about the figures shown in tables 12 and 13 is that the number of Indigenous commencements in 1998 (4300) actually slightly exceeds the number in a contract of training (4200) in that year. This shows just how recent the attainment of Indigenous equity with other Australians in apprenticeships and traineeships has been. More importantly, this means the proportion of the total number of apprentices and trainees who are Indigenous is likely to increase even further in the near future. This pattern is the opposite pattern to the total national situation where the number of commencements (147 800) is much lower than the total number in a contract of training at any one time (219 800).

4.2 Male and female participation in apprenticeships and traineeships

As shown in table 13 above, of the 4200 Indigenous apprentices and trainees in 1998, some 2700 (64%) were male and 1500 (36%) were female.

In table 12 we can see that some 2500 of the commencing Indigenous apprentices and trainees (58%) were male and 1800 were female (42%).

This means that the gender imbalance in apprenticeships and traineeships can be expected to improve because we are now seeing relatively higher numbers of female commencements.

This is reinforced by reference to figure 15 which shows the numbers of male, female and all Indigenous apprentices and trainees as proportions of all male, female and total apprentices and trainees.

With commencements we can see that there are no gender differences, with the proportion of apprentices and trainees commencing in 1998 who are Indigenous being 2.9% of the total commencements, irrespective of whether we are referring to male, female or all commencements. Coincidentally these shares are commensurate with the proportion of Indigenous students to the total number of students in the VET sector as a whole in Australia in 1998.

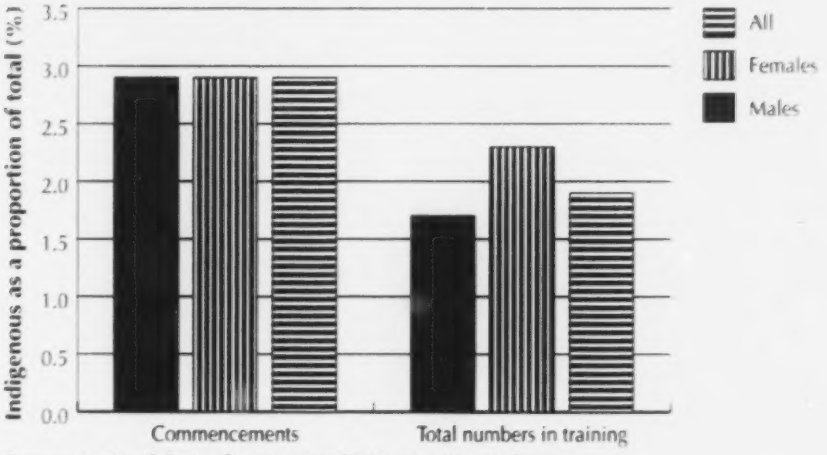
The situation is different when we consider the proportions of the total number of apprentices and trainees in contracts of training in 1998 who were Indigenous.

Only 1.7% of all male apprentices and trainees were Indigenous, a rate that falls below the proportion of Indigenous peoples in the total Australian population (which is around 2%). Thus here equality with non-Indigenous Australians has not yet been reached.

In contrast, some 2.3% of female apprentices and trainees are now Indigenous. This rate exceeds the proportion of Indigenous peoples in the total population.

Taking both genders together, we can see that the proportion of apprentices and trainees in Australia who are Indigenous has now reached a rate that is commensurate with the Indigenous share in the total Australian population. Thus, in crude terms, equity has now been reached.

Figure 15: Indigenous apprentices and trainees as a proportion of all apprentices and trainees by gender, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

4.3 Age differences amongst apprentices and trainees

Although overall equality between Indigenous peoples and other Australians is now being reached with respect to participation in new apprenticeships, we can see that some quite significant differences still exist amongst different age groups.

Indigenous teenagers and young adults aged 15–24 years are still far less likely to participate in apprenticeships and traineeships than are other young Australians, as shown in figure 16.

On the other hand, a far greater proportion of Indigenous apprentices and trainees, nearly half, are aged 25 years or more, compared to under 30% of all apprentices and trainees being aged 25 years or more.

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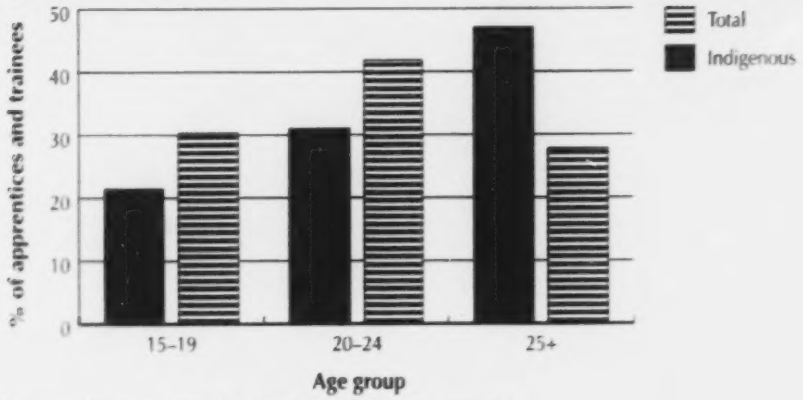
Figure 16: The age distribution of Indigenous and total apprentices and trainees, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

These patterns are reflected in the breakdown of Indigenous contracts of training as a proportion of all contracts of training amongst different age groups, as shown in table 14.

Table 14: The age structure of Indigenous apprentices and trainees, 1998

Age cohort	No. of Indigenous apprentices and trainees ('000)	Indigenous as a proportion of all contracts of training %
	Commencements	
15–19 years	1.2	2.0
20–24 years	1.1	3.1
25 years or more	2.0	3.8
All ages	**4.3**	**2.9**
	No. in training	
15–19 years	0.9	1.4
20–24 years	1.3	1.4
25 years or more	2.0	3.2
All ages	**4.2**	**1.9**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Whether we consider commencements or the numbers in training, Indigenous teenagers and young adults have relatively lower proportions of total apprenticeship and trainee places than do older Indigenous apprentices and trainees. However, it is important to note that this situation will improve in the near future as the 1998 commencements data shows improved levels of new starts amongst Indigenous teenagers and young adults.

4.4 The nature of training undertaken by apprentices and trainees

Some significant differences exists between Indigenous and all apprentices and trainees in terms of the occupation of their contract of training, as shown in table 15.

Table 15: The occupations of Indigenous, all apprentices and trainees, 1998

Occupation	Proportion of total contracts of training (%)	
	Indigenous apprentices & trainees	All apprentices & trainees
Managers and administrators	0.7	1.1
Professionals	4.9	0.6
Associate professional	3.5	3.0
Mechanical and fabrication engineers	3.9	9.2
Automotive tradespersons	3.6	10.3
Electrical and electronic trades	3.3	7.7
Building and construction tradespersons	9.9	11.5
Food tradespersons	3.7	8.9
Skilled agricultural and horticultural	2.2	1.6
Hairdressers	2.2	4.4
Other tradespersons N.E.I.	2.3	4.1
Advanced clerical and service workers	1.3	0.1
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	31.9	18.8
Intermediate production and transport workers	2.6	2.0
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	7.2	8.7
Labourers and related workers	16.8	8.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The occupations which have relatively greater proportions of Indigenous apprentices and trainees, compared to the proportions of all apprentices and trainees, are:

- intermediate clerical, sales and service workers
- labourers and related workers
- the professional occupations
- skilled agricultural and horticultural

The occupations which have proportionally more Australians generally, compared to Indigenous apprentices and trainees, are:

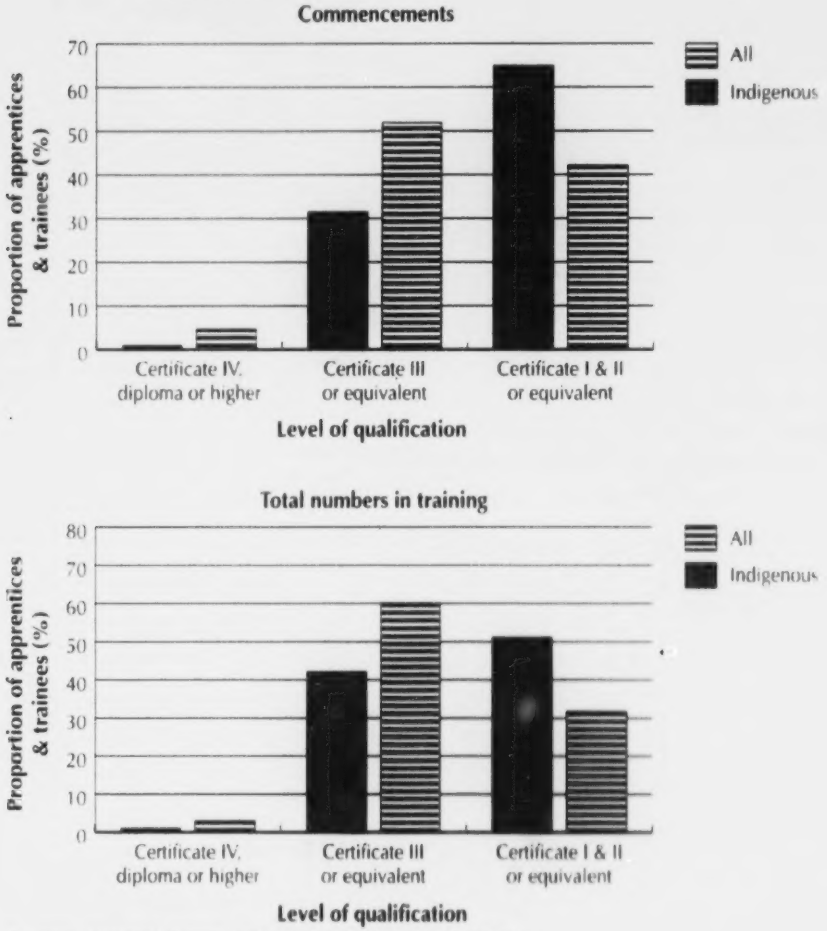
- mechanical and fabrication engineers
- automotive tradespersons
- electrical and electronic trades
- food industry tradespersons
- hairdressers
- managerial and administrative

Importantly, there are similar portions in the building and construction trades; intermediate and elementary clerical, sales and services workers and the associate professional occupations.

A clear picture emerges in that Indigenous apprentices and trainees are under-represented in the traditional trades occupations, with the exception of the building and construction trades. The main occupational areas where Indigenous peoples are most highly represented as apprentices and trainees are in the elementary and intermediate clerical, sales and services areas, and as labourers and related workers.

There are also some significant differences between Indigenous and other apprentices and trainees with respect to the level of qualification being sought by apprentices and trainees. This is shown in figure 17.

Figure 17: The level of qualification being sought by Indigenous and all apprentices and trainees, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Whether we look at commencements or the total number in training, the picture is clear. Indigenous apprenticeship and traineeship training is still more concentrated at Certificate I and II level or equivalent, while the biggest category nationally is contracts of training at the Certificate III level.

Further detailed statistical information about Indigenous participation in new apprenticeships is given in appendix 3, tables 19a–22a.

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5 The vocational education outcomes of Indigenous students

5.1 Overall vocational education outcomes

Various indicators of education outcomes are reported in table 16. The education outcomes indicators shown are for Indigenous students in the VET sector overall and for all students in VET. The education outcomes referred to here are based on the performance of students in successfully completing (or otherwise) each module in which they enrol. These measures should not be confused with those used for the national reporting of VET performance (ANTA, 1998b) which show the hours that lead to a satisfactory completion (or otherwise) as a proportion of total hours. Thus, here we are gauging the performance of individual students, rather than measuring the effort or load taken to deliver successful outcomes.

Table 16: Vocational education outcomes

Outcome	Indigenous students (%)	All students (%)
Module pass rate	48.9	59.2
Module fail rate	13.0	7.6
Module withdrawal rate	13.5	8.1
Continuous module enrolment rate	11.4	8.1
Net module pass rate	79.0	88.6
Module completion rate	66.0	79.8

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The first and most important indicator of education outcomes from VET is the module pass rate. It is measured simply as the number of modules passed expressed as a proportion of the total number of module enrolments. Just under 50% of module enrolments by Indigenous students in 1998 resulted in a pass as shown in table 16. This compares with a national pass rate for all module enrolments of just under 60%.

Indigenous VET students experienced higher failure rates than all VET students in 1998. The module fail rate is measured as the number of modules which were assessed and resulted in a failure as a proportion of the total number of module enrolments. Some 13% of Indigenous module enrolments across the whole VET sector were assessed as a fail. The national module failure rate for all VET students was just under 8% (table 16).

Another important indicator of what happens to VET students is the module withdrawal rate. This withdrawal rate is the number of module enrolments resulting in a withdrawal without failure, a withdrawal with failure or a withdrawal and transfer as a proportion of all module enrolments. In 1998, the withdrawal rate for VET Indigenous students was over 13%, whereas it was only 9% for all VET students.

The continuing module enrolment rate is measured by the proportion of module enrolments that are yet to be completed, and are thus continuing, expressed as a proportion of all module enrolments. The continuing module enrolment rate for Indigenous students in the VET sector was some 11% in 1998, compared to a national average rate for all VET students of just over 8%.

If we net out withdrawals and the students who were not assessed such as continuing students, a better indication of the true pass rate is obtained. The net module pass rate is calculated as the sum of the number of module enrolments that were assessed and resulted in a pass expressed as a proportion of the total of the number of module enrolments leading to a pass plus the number involving assessment with a failure. The net module pass rate for Indigenous students was 79%, and the national rate for all students was 88.6% (table 16).

The module completion rate (MCR) is another indicator of VET performance each year. The MCR measures the number of module enrolments that were completed, as a proportion of all module enrolments except those classified as incompletions, such as:

- students who were assessed and failed
- students who were assessed but results were withheld
- students who withdrew without failure
- students who withdrew and failed
- students who withdrew and transferred

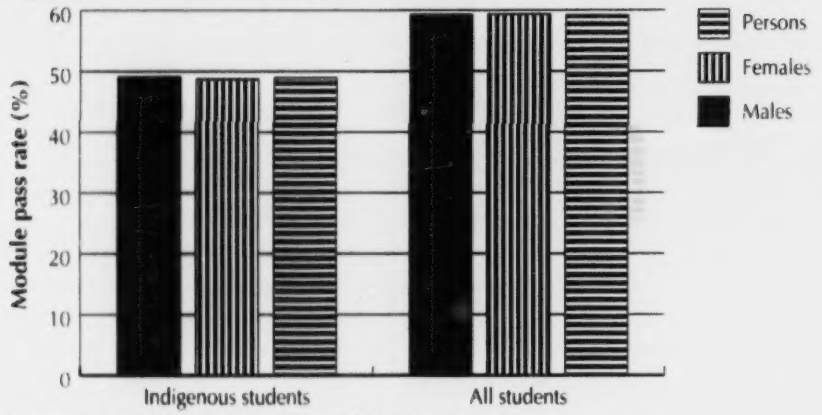
The module completion rate for Indigenous VET students in 1998 was 66%, compared to a national VET module completion rate of around 80%.

In summary the module pass rate now being achieved by Indigenous students in VET (i.e. just under 50%) is lower, but not all that much lower than that achieved by all VET students (i.e. just under 60%). Although Indigenous failure rates are higher than the national average, this is not the only reason why Indigenous pass rates are lower. This situation is also partly due to the fact that the Indigenous withdrawal rates are higher than for other students, and because proportionally more Indigenous students are continuing in their training program than are other students.

5.2 The vocational education outcomes achieved by males and females

As shown in figure 18 there are no differences in the pass rates experienced by males and females in either the population of Indigenous students or in the overall VET student body. Thus any gender differences are not the reason why Indigenous pass rates are lower than the average for all VET students.

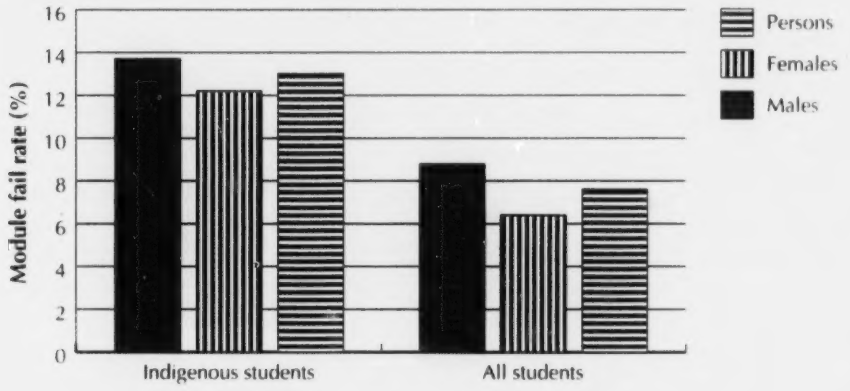
Figure 18: Male and female pass rates, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

There are, however, some differences in the fail rates experienced by males and females in the Indigenous VET student body. Male Indigenous students are more likely to fail (13.7%) than are Indigenous females (12.2%), as shown in figure 19.

Figure 19: Male and female fail rates, 1998



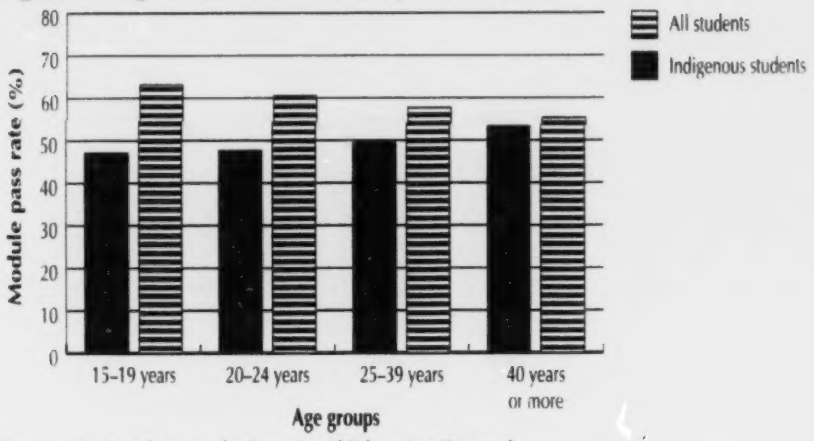
Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

5.3 Age differences in vocational education outcomes

More differences are evident in the education outcomes achieved by Indigenous students of different age groups, as shown in figure 20.

Differences between Indigenous students and all VET students in the proportion of module enrolments that result in a pass are greatest in the younger age groups. For instance around 47% of module enrolments by 15–19-year olds result in a pass, whereas the national pass rate for this age group is 63%. This gap narrows, the older the age of VET students, so that for students aged 40 years and over the pass rates are 53% and 55% respectively for Indigenous students and all students.

Figure 20: Age differences in module pass rates, 1998



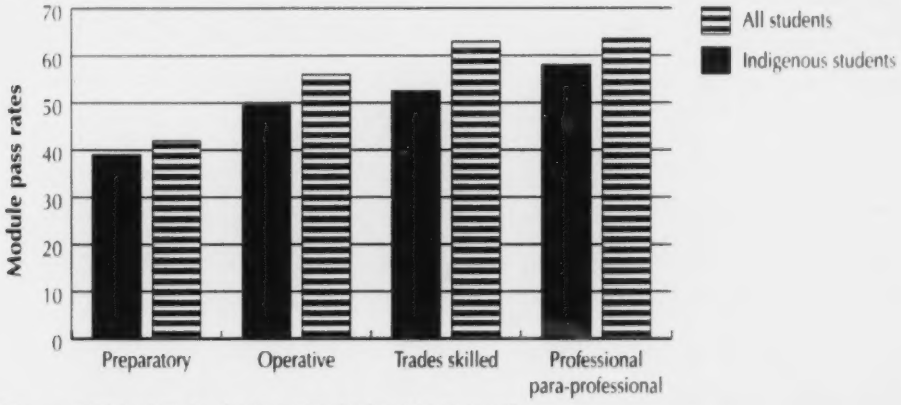
Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The other important thing to note about the information presented in figure 20 is that for Indigenous students the pass rate improves as age rises. Whereas the opposite is the case with all students.

5.4 Vocational education outcomes from different streams of study

There are significant differences in the pass rates of Indigenous students in the different streams of study, as shown in figure 21.

Figure 21: Pass rates of Indigenous students and all students by stream of study, 1998



Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The lowest rate of achievement is in the preparatory stream with just under 40% of modules leading to a pass. Failure and withdrawal rates are also high amongst Indigenous students in the preparatory stream.

Almost half of all Indigenous module enrolments at the operatives level resulted in a pass. Failure rates here are much lower, but withdrawal rates are still high.

Better pass rates (52.4%) are achieved by Indigenous students enrolled in trades/skilled-training-level modules. The highest Indigenous pass rates (58.2%)

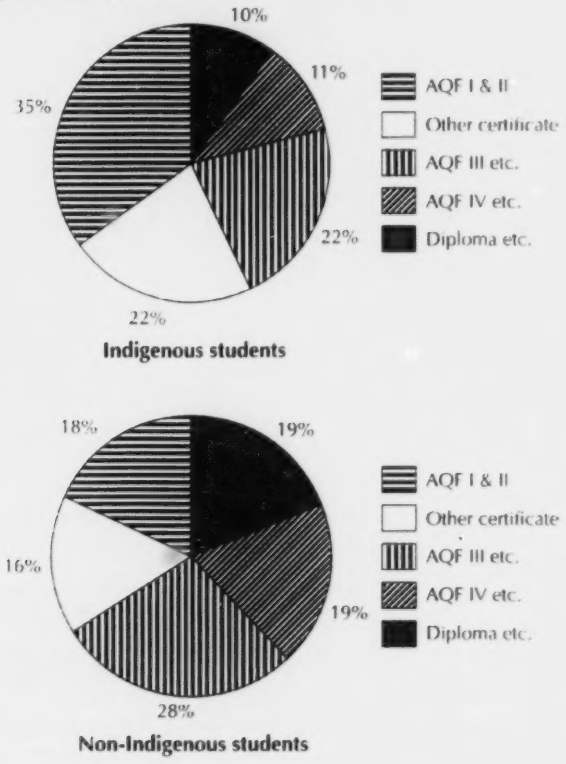
are achieved by those enrolling in modules at the professional and para-professional levels.

This pattern of higher pass rates being achieved in professional/para-professional and trades levels by Indigenous students mirrors the pattern of pass rates by stream of study for all students. However, as shown in figure 21, the national average of module pass rates by stream of study is higher than the Indigenous pass rates by stream of study in all cases.

5.5 The qualifications completed by graduates

The level of qualifications obtained by Indigenous TAFE graduates and other TAFE graduates in 1997 is depicted in figure 22. The students were graduates for programs of at least 200 hours or one semester in duration.

Figure 22: The level of qualifications completed by Indigenous and non-Indigenous TAFE graduates[a], 1998



(a) Graduates from TAFE programs of at least 200 hours or one semester's duration
Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Non-Indigenous graduates were significantly more likely to attain a Diploma or Certificate IV or equivalent qualification than were Indigenous TAFE graduates. Non-Indigenous graduation rates were also higher than Certificate III or equivalent programs, although the differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduates were much less marked in this case.

Indigenous graduation rates in other certificates were higher than amongst non-Indigenous students.

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Finally, Indigenous TAFE graduates were about twice as likely to be graduating from Certificate I and II programs than were non-Indigenous graduates.

Further statistical information about the vocational educational outcomes reported in this chapter of the report is given in appendix 3, tables 23a–29a.

5.6 Apprentice and trainee outcomes

There were over 1400 apprentice and trainee completions by Indigenous peoples in 1998, as shown in table 17.

Table 17: Apprentice and trainee completions by Indigenous peoples by level of qualification gained, 1998

Qualification	No. of completions	Proportion of completions (%)
Diploma and Advanced Diploma	0	0.0
Certificate IV	3	0.2
Certificate III	273	19.1
Certificate II	891	62.5
Certificate I	91	6.4
Qualification not stated	168	11.8
Total	**1426**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Nearly two-thirds of those were at Certificate II level or equivalent, with the bulk of the remainder being at Certificate III level or equivalent.

Indigenous apprentice and trainee completions made up 2.6% of all apprentice and trainee completions in Australia in 1998, as shown in table 18. This rate is good noting that the number of Indigenous apprentices and trainees in training represents only 1.9% of the national total.

Table 18: Apprentice and trainee completions, 1998

Characteristic	Indigenous completions (%)	All completions (%)	Indigenous as a proportion of all completions (%)
Gender			
Males	59.3	65.5	2.3
Females	40.7	34.5	3.1
All persons	100.0	100.0	2.6
Age			
15–19 years	14.9	14.7	2.6
20–24 years	30.7	57.5	1.4
25 years or more	54.4	27.8	5.1
All ages	100.0	100.0	2.6
Qualification gained			
Diploma or Advanced Diploma	0.0	0.1	0.0
Certificate IV	0.2	1.0	0.5
Certificate III	19.1	45.9	1.1
Certificate II	62.5	32.2	5.0
Certificate I	6.4	13.2	1.3
Qualification not stated	11.8	7.6	4.0
All qualifications gained	100.0	100.0	2.6

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

However, table 18 also shows that Indigenous apprentice and trainee completions are proportionally low when compared to the national average at Certificate III level or higher. Indigenous people completing a contract of

training are relatively more likely than other Australians to gain a Certificate II level or equivalent qualification.

Table 18 also shows that the gender balance is slightly better amongst Indigenous peoples completing apprenticeships and traineeships than is the case amongst total apprentice and trainee completions in Australia.

Over half of all Indigenous peoples completing apprenticeships and traineeships were aged 25 years or more. In contrast nearly 58% of all completions nationally were by people aged 20–24 years. The proportions of completors who were aged less than 20 years were similar for Indigenous peoples and all Australians completing apprenticeships and traineeships.

6 Indigenous job outcomes

Some 50% of Indigenous TAFE graduates from programs of at least 200 hours, or one semester in duration, were employed at 30 May of the year following their graduation, as shown in table 19. This compared with an employment rate of over 70% for non-Indigenous graduates.

Table 19: The labour force status of TAFE Indigenous and non-Indigenous graduates

Labour force status at 30 May the following year[a]	Indigenous graduates (%)			Non-Indigenous graduates (%)		
	1996	1997	1998	1996	1997	1998
Employed	51.7	49.2	50.4	71.2	73.3	74.1
Unemployed	21.9	22.3	20.9	15.0	13.9	12.9
Not in the labour force	26.3	28.3	28.6	13.6	12.8	13.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) Labour force status at 30 May 1998 for 1997 TAFE graduates and labour force status at 30 May 1997 for 1996 TAFE graduates. Derived from the NCVER Graduate Destination Survey.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Similarly the unemployment rate of Indigenous TAFE graduates exceeds 20%, and is considerably higher than that of non-Indigenous TAFE graduates (12.9%). Non-participation in the labour force following graduation from TAFE is also very much higher for Indigenous peoples (28.6%) than for non-Indigenous peoples (13.1%).

The reasons behind these patterns are complex. As shown earlier in this report, Indigenous peoples have considerably poorer education backgrounds and much lower attachment to the labour force prior to their enrolment in VET than do other Australians. Moreover, fewer Indigenous peoples have employment while they are undertaking their VET program compared with other VET students. For example, only 40% of Indigenous VET graduates were employed during their final semester prior to graduation, compared with 64% for non-Indigenous peoples in the same situation.

Undoubtedly these factors and a combination of persisting discrimination in the labour market, together with the fact that proportionally more Indigenous peoples live in areas of depressed economic and employment prospects, all contribute to poorer employment prospects for Indigenous VET graduates.

Despite the continuing differences in the employment outcomes of Indigenous and other VET students, it is also clear that VET participation and graduation does make a significant difference to employment prospects.

In aggregate terms, as shown in figure 23, employment rates of Indigenous peoples rise modestly from some 46% being employed prior to their VET course to over 50% after graduation. Moreover, unemployment rates amongst Indigenous peoples drops from 26% to 21% following graduation.

Figure 23: The labour force status of TAFE graduates before and after completing the course, 1998

Indigenous TAFE graduates (%)	Before (%)	After (%)
Employed	46.2	50.4
Unemployed	26.0	20.9
Not in labour force	27.8	28.6
All TAFE graduates (%)	**Before (%)**	**After (%)**
Employed	66.2	74.1
Unemployed	15.5	12.9
Not in labour force	18.3	13.1

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The biggest employment outcome from VET courses for Indigenous peoples is the conversion rate from part-time employment to full-time employment. As shown in figure 24, the part-time employment of Indigenous peoples falls considerably from 43% to 36% following graduation from TAFE. Full-time employment increases substantially following graduation from 57% to 65%.

Figure 24: Full-time and part-time employment of TAFE graduates before and after completing the course, 1998

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

The information in figures 23 and 24 also highlights the extent to which employment inequality exists between Indigenous peoples and other Australians.

Graduation from VET does improve the labour market prospects of Indigenous peoples but it does not eliminate the significant employment inequalities that exist.

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7 Changing practices in TAFE institutes

7.1 Examining practices at the institute level

To date in this report we have considered the performance of the VET sector as a whole in providing vocational education and training to Indigenous peoples. It is also important to examine what developments at the VET provider level might lie behind the major changes that have occurred in the provision of VET to Indigenous peoples over the past decade.

As discussed earlier the bulk of VET provision to Indigenous peoples is made by TAFE providers. Because of this it was decided to undertake some fieldwork in a sample of TAFE institutes to gather more information and document for the first time some of the changing practices that are occurring within TAFE providers as they attempt to better meet the VET needs of Indigenous peoples.

A sample of 16 TAFE institutes was selected for the fieldwork, noting that there were some 88 VET providers classified as TAFE providers in 1998. The sample was chosen in order to have:

- representation across Australia from all States and Territories
- representation of a range of TAFE institute sizes in terms of the number of Indigenous students
  - with Indigenous student numbers in each TAFE provider in this sample ranging from around 100 to over 2000
- representation of various degrees of success in terms of Indigenous pass rates
  - with Indigenous module pass rates ranging from around one-third to as high as three-quarters of all modules being undertaken by Indigenous students resulting in a pass

The characteristics of the sample of TAFE providers participating in the fieldwork for the study are shown in table 20.

The 16 participating providers represented just under 20% of all VET providers that were classified as TAFE providers. The total student body in the sample providers was also some 20% of all TAFE students. The average institute size in the sample, in terms of overall student numbers, was just over 15 000 students. This is similar to the average number of students at all TAFEs. Thus the sample was representative of all TAFEs in this regard.

Table 20: Characteristics of the sample of TAFE providers for fieldwork

No. of TAFE providers	
– in the sample	16
– in total	88
Proportion of TAFE providers	
– in the sample (%)	18.2
– in total (%)	100.0
No. of Indigenous students in TAFE	
– in the sample	13 500
– in total	38 800
Proportion of Indigenous students	
– in the sample (%)	34.8
– in total (%)	100.0
Total of all TAFE students	
– in the sample	250 000
– in total	1 315 000
Proportion of all TAFE students	
– in the sample (%)	19.0
– in total (%)	100.0
Average no. of students per TAFE provider	
– in the sample of TAFE providers	15 400
– in all TAFE providers	15 000
Average no. of Indigenous students per TAFE provider	
– in the sample of TAFE providers	845
– in all TAFE providers	440

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research and Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

However, the 16 sample TAFE providers were overly representative as providers of VET to Indigenous students. Collectively they enrolled over one-third of all Indigenous TAFE students. The average number of Indigenous students per sample institute of 845 was nearly twice that of average Indigenous enrolments per provider across the TAFE sector as a whole. This was to ensure that a spread of different-sized TAFE providers, in terms of the total number of Indigenous students, were included in the sample.

The fieldwork was framed to specifically examine the following issues:

- to consider whether or not TAFE institutes have developed deliberate policies and strategies in order to make their VET programs more accessible to Indigenous peoples
- to examine the nature of any special arrangements TAFE providers have put into place to make institutes more accommodating of Indigenous peoples' vocational education needs and aspirations such as
  - Indigenous advisory structures to contribute to institutional decision-making
  - the establishment of Indigenous/Aboriginal education units or other specialist organisational structures within TAFE institutes
  - the development of special Indigenous VET programs or courses
- to determine whether or not any link exists at the institute level between the willingness of TAFE providers to make vocational education opportunities available to Indigenous peoples and the educational outcomes attained by Indigenous students
- to consider the perspectives of Indigenous students about the effectiveness of arrangements made at the institute level to meet their aspirations and requirements

7.2 Institutional policies to improve Indigenous VET

All TAFE providers reported the introduction of institutional arrangements of one kind or another which govern the development of deliberate policies, strategies and plans aimed at the improvement of VET for Indigenous peoples.

The nature and incidence of these mechanisms are described in table 21. All TAFE providers reported national-level policies and strategies having an impact on the development of institute-level Indigenous education policies, strategies and plans. The mechanisms that were cited as being used universally were:

- The National Indigenous Education Policy, and/or the priorities arising from Indigenous Education Strategies Initiatives Program (IESIP) agreements with the Commonwealth (see Commonwealth of Australia 1989).
- Priorities arising from the Australian National Training Authority such as those identified by ANTA's Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander People's Training Advisory Council and priorities arising from the national VET policy *A bridge to the future: Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 1998–2003* (see ANTA 1998a).
- Priorities developed by the Ministerial Council on Education, Employment, Training and Youth Affairs (MCEETYA) such as *The national strategy for the education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples 1996–2002* (see MCEETYA 1995).

Table 21: Policy and planning mechanisms governing institute arrangements for Indigenous education

Type of policy/planning mechanism	Proportion of TAFE providers reporting involvement (%)
National level policies influencing institutional arrangements	
❖ The National Indigenous Education Policy and Commonwealth IESIP agreements with the State/Territory	100
❖ ANTA priorities, including from the National VET Strategy, *A bridge to the future*	100
❖ MCEETYA priorities for Indigenous education and training	100
State/Territory policies	
❖ Especially developed State/Territory policies to improve Indigenous VET[a]	69
❖ Part of a broader State/Territory equity policy	25
❖ Indigenous vocational education objectives are part of the institutional performance/resource agreement with State/Territory training authority	6
Total	**100**
Institution level plans	
❖ Indigenous vocational education goals part of institute's corporate plan, strategic plan or equity plan	88
❖ Special Indigenous VET plan or strategy for the institute	0
❖ Part of performance agreement/resource agreement with State/Territory training authority	12
Total	**100**

(a) Includes State/Territory plans that are currently being developed or revised

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

A number of different State/Territory-level policy or planning mechanisms were reported as being used at the institute level across Australia. Almost 70% of TAFE providers reported the use of a State/Territory-wide plan to govern the development of arrangements to improve Indigenous education at the provider level. One-quarter of providers reported reference to a State/Territory-wide equity plan as a guiding force, and the remaining 6% reported the performance

agreement with the State/Territory training authority as the key mechanism at this level.

Equity and access for Indigenous peoples was the key theme for these arrangements. Themes less common but evident in some cases were:

- negotiation or consultation with Indigenous communities
- the involvement of Indigenous peoples in decision-making or even developing partnerships with the Indigenous community
- the development of an environment of a sustained learning culture or of being culturally inclusive

In contrast to the mechanisms at State/Territory level, all TAFE providers reported the incorporation of goals for Indigenous education within the institute's corporate plan, strategic plan, equity plan or performance/resource agreement (as shown in table 21), rather than the development of a special and separate institute level Indigenous education plan.

It is interesting to note that the development of strategies impacting on Indigenous education at the institute level is compulsory across the university sector in Australia. These strategies are documented in the recently released report *Higher education: Indigenous education strategies 1999–2001* (DETYA 1999).

7.3 The establishment of Indigenous advisory committees

As shown in table 22, almost 70% of TAFE providers reported that they had some kind of Indigenous advisory committee structure in place.

Table 22: The incidence of Indigenous advisory committees in TAFE institutes

	Proportion of TAFE providers (%)
Has an Indigenous advisory committee structure in place	69
Does not have an Indigenous advisory committee	31
Total	**100**

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

The role of these structures generally related to the operation of an Indigenous Aboriginal education unit within the institute (see section 7.4), although some also had a broader institute-wide governance role to advise on all matters pertaining to the provision of VET to Indigenous students within the institute.

Membership of these committees varied across TAFE providers. Some had a very externally oriented flavour, with membership being mainly drawn from the Indigenous community the institute is seeking to serve and from representatives of local Indigenous organisations. Some also included representatives from relevant government agencies. Other committee structures were more heavily drawn from staff and students within the institute, although most also had Indigenous community representation.

Committees were not necessarily restricted to exclusive Indigenous membership, although most had majority or mainly Indigenous memberships.

7.4 The establishment of Indigenous education units within TAFE

The overwhelming majority of TAFE providers have now established some kind of specific Indigenous organisational structure within their institute, as shown in table 23.

Table 23: The nature of Indigenous organisational structures within TAFE institutes

Type of Indigenous structures	Proportion of TAFE institutes (%)
TAFEs that have an Indigenous/Aboriginal education unit	81
TAFEs that have an Indigenous/Aboriginal faculty/school	7
TAFEs that have no specific Indigenous organisational structure	12
Total	**100**

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Most commonly (in over 80% of TAFEs) this takes the form of an Indigenous or Aboriginal education unit. In some cases (6% of TAFEs) this extends to the existence of an Indigenous faculty or school within the institute.

Even in those cases where no specific Indigenous organisational structure existed (13% of TAFEs in this study) other arrangements were in place such as:

- referral of Indigenous students to Indigenous education units in other nearby institutes
- special support for Indigenous students provided as an identified part of an institute's general student support services program
- Aboriginal liaison officers providing support, even though there is no Indigenous education unit

Surprisingly, most TAFE providers had Indigenous education units that did not have a strategic plan at the unit level. Some 68% of TAFEs had a unit with no specific unit-level strategic plan, while only 20% of TAFEs had a unit with a unit-level strategic plan. The remaining 12% of TAFEs did not have a specialist Indigenous organisation structure.

The types of services provided by Indigenous education units are outlined in table 24. These units are generally involved in three different kinds of activities, being:

- the provision of special VET courses, programs or modules that have been designed especially for Indigenous students, including bridging or preparatory programs
- the provision of student support services to Indigenous students or help to access such services
- Indigenous cultural awareness training

Table 24: The type of services provided by Indigenous education units[a] in TAFE institutes

Type of service provided by Indigenous/Aboriginal education units (AEUs)	Proportion of TAFEs (%)			
	AEU provides this service	AEU does not provide this service	Does not have AEU	Total
Specially designed Indigenous programs				
AEU develops and delivers special programs, including bridging courses	88	0	12	100
AEU provides link to access special programs run elsewhere	81	7	12	100
Student support services				
AEU provides/accesses student support services (e.g. cultural, financial, housing, counselling etc.)	88	0	12	100
Cultural awareness training				
For AEU staff	63	25	12	100
For mainstream staff	44	44	12	100

(a) Includes services provided by Indigenous faculties/schools within TAFE providers

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Over 80% of providers had an Indigenous/Aboriginal education unit or equivalent involved in the development and/or delivery of special courses and programs for Indigenous students. This includes bridging and preparatory courses, very often focussing on literacy, language and numeracy programs aimed at overcoming the poor education background of some Indigenous students. Special programs also included a wide range of specified technical and vocational programs aimed at specific Indigenous requirements in areas such as Indigenous community organisations management, Indigenous health services, Indigenous education worker courses, Indigenous legal support and so forth.

Some 81% of TAFEs that had Indigenous education units were also involved in providing a link to enable Indigenous students to access special Indigenous programs run elsewhere by other providers. The remainder of TAFE providers either had no such unit or had a unit that did not offer a service linking to other programs.

Similarly all Indigenous education units that existed in TAFE providers (i.e. in 88% of TAFEs in this study) are involved in the direct provision of student support services to Indigenous students and/or in assisting Indigenous students to access the services offered elsewhere in the institute or, in some cases, services offered from outside agencies. These services generally included areas such as cultural, financial, housing and counselling services. However, there was little or no evidence of specially developed employment services being included. The focus was on welfare and social services.

Over 60% of TAFE providers had Aboriginal education units involved in the provision of cultural awareness training to the Indigenous education unit staff. Only 44% of TAFE institutes had Aboriginal education units reporting an involvement in developing and delivering cultural awareness training to other staff within the institute.

7.5 The incidence of special Indigenous vocational education courses

All TAFEs that had an Indigenous education unit (i.e. 88% of TAFE providers) also delivered especially designed Indigenous VET courses or training programs. On average some 38.5% of all Indigenous enrolments in TAFE were in those programs especially designed for Indigenous students.

The remaining 61.5% of Indigenous students enrolled in modules or courses open to any TAFE student (Indigenous or non-Indigenous alike).

The number of Indigenous students enrolling in special Indigenous courses and programs varied significantly across TAFE providers, as shown in table 25. Some 30% of institutional enrolments in these special programs were under 100 in students in total, while a further 30% of TAFEs with special Indigenous courses had Indigenous enrolments in these courses of between 100 and 250. The remaining 40% of TAFEs with special Indigenous courses had enrolments of over 250 students in them.

Table 25: Indigenous students enrolled in special Indigenous VET programs[a]

Indigenous program enrolments	Proportion of TAFE providers (%)
No. of students enrolled in special Indigenous programs	
Less than 100	30
100–249	30
250–500	20
500 or more	20
Total	**100**
Indigenous enrolments in special programs as a proportion of all Indigenous enrolments	
Less than 25%	20
25–49%	40
50% or more	40
Total	**100**

(a) Excludes TAFEs that do not have an AEU and do not have any special Indigenous VET courses

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

The relative importance of special Indigenous course enrolments compared with Indigenous enrolments in mainstream TAFE programs and courses also varied amongst TAFE institutes. In 60% of TAFEs with special courses, Indigenous enrolments in them were less than half the total enrolments of Indigenous students in that TAFE. Thus a surprisingly high proportion of TAFEs that have special Indigenous courses — some 40% — have more than half of their Indigenous student body enrolled in those special courses (table 25).

7.6 The Indigenous staffing situation in TAFE

According to the 1996 ABS Census of Population and Housing the number of Indigenous peoples employed in the VET sector had reached around 1000 out of a total national-level employment of almost 55 000 people, as shown in table 26. This represented some 1.9% of total VET employment, which is a healthy level of Indigenous employment in the VET sector, given that Indigenous peoples make up some 2% of Australia's overall population. Clearly, Commonwealth funding through the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program has had an impact here.

Table 26: Indigenous persons and all persons employed in the provision of vocational education and training in Australia, 1996

Occupation	Indigenous		All persons		Indigenous as a proportion of total (%)
	No. employed ('000)	Proportion of total employed (%)	No. employed ('000)	Proportion of total employed (%)	
Education managerial faculty or school head[a]	*	1.6	1.4	2.7	1.2
VET teacher	0.2	23.4	26.7	52.5	0.9
Training officer	0.3	28.5	22.2	43.7	1.3
Indigenous education worker[a]	1.5	46.5	0.5	1.0	85.3
Total	**2.0**	**100.0**	**50.8**	**100.0**	**1.9**

* Fewer than 50 persons

(a) A breakdown of the number of persons employed in these positions by sector was not available. The NCVER has estimated that one-third of all employment in these positions was in the VET sector, and these estimates form the basis of the figures used in this report

Source: Australian Bureau of Statistics 1996 Census of Population and Housing

The information in table 26 also shows that almost half of Indigenous employment in VET in Australia is in specialist Indigenous education worker positions. In contrast only 1.0% of total employment in the VET sector is in such positions.

Some 96% of total VET employment is in teacher/trainer positions. Indigenous people remain under-represented in such positions, with Indigenous VET teachers/trainers making up only half of all Indigenous employment in VET.

The likelihood of people holding senior management positions in VET is only around 60% of the national rate, as shown in table 26.

The staffing situation of Indigenous education units within the sample of 16 TAFE institutes included in the fieldwork for this study is shown in table 27.

Table 27: Staffing levels in Indigenous/Aboriginal education units/faculties in TAFE institutes[a]

Type of staff	Average AEU staffing level per TAFE provider	Proportion of staff in AEU (%)
AEU support staff[b]		
Indigenous	7	58
Non-Indigenous	5	42
Total support staff	12	100
AEU teaching only staff		
Indigenous	3	30
Non-Indigenous	6	70
Total teaching only staff	9	100
Total AEU staff		
Indigenous	10	46
Non-Indigenous	11	54
Total AEU staff	21	100

(a) Only includes TAFE institutes that have an Indigenous structure

(b) Includes cases where an Indigenous faculty/school exists. The support staff category includes staff who may also do some teaching. The teaching category is teaching only.

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

The average staffing level of Indigenous education units was 21 staff with some 46% of staff in the units being Indigenous peoples.

Of these an average of 12 per staff were unit support staff (who may have also had some teaching/training responsibilities). Almost 60% of Indigenous education unit support staff were Indigenous peoples.

The remaining staff, averaging nine per Indigenous education unit, were teaching-only staff. In this case, however, only 30% were Indigenous peoples.

The distribution of Indigenous education unit staff across TAFE providers is shown in table 28. Some 12% of institutes had no unit at all, and 38% of TAFEs had small Indigenous education units with fewer than five staff. One-quarter of TAFEs had units with more than five but less than ten staff, and the remaining 25% of units were relatively large with ten or more staff in them.

Table 28: The distribution of staffing in Aboriginal education units/faculties in TAFE institutes

Type of staff	Proportion of TAFE providers[a]				
	No staff	Fewer than 5 staff	5–9 staff	10 staff or more	Total
Support staff in AEU[b]					
Indigenous staff	12	44	25	19	100
Non-Indigenous staff	64	12	12	12	100
Total	12	31	31	26	100
Teaching only staff in AEU[b]					
Indigenous staff	57	31	6	6	100
Non-Indigenous staff	75	0	6	19	100
Total	57	12	12	19	100
Total AEU[b] staff					
Indigenous	12	38	25	25	100
Non-Indigenous	50	6	12	32	100
Total	12	12	44	32	100

(a) Includes all TAFEs in fieldwork sample

(b) Includes cases where an Indigenous faculty or school exists. The support staff category includes some staff who also do some teaching. The teaching staff category covers teaching only staff

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

In addition to the staff within Indigenous education units, the TAFEs in our sample had an average of a further ten Indigenous teaching staff. As shown in table 29, over half of all TAFEs had fewer than five Indigenous teaching staff in mainstream VET programs. Over one-third of TAFEs had at least ten Indigenous teaching staff in mainstream VET programs.

Table 29: Indigenous staff in TAFE institutes not working in Indigenous education units/faculties

No. of Indigenous staff not in AEUs	Proportion of TAFE providers (%)
None	7
1–4	51
5–9	7
10 or more	35

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

On the other hand, some 7% of TAFEs had no Indigenous staff teaching in mainstream VET courses.

7.7 The link between Indigenous access and vocational education outcomes

The fieldwork conducted for this study shows that there is no clear link between a TAFE's willingness to open its doors to Indigenous peoples, in terms of making relatively large numbers of places available to Indigenous students, and performance in terms of the outcomes achieved by Indigenous students. Nor are better outcomes achieved necessarily by those TAFEs which have smaller numbers of Indigenous students, and who could potentially provide each of them with more specialised attention and support.

In fact we found size is no barrier. The top-performing TAFE institute in our sample, with a module pass rate for its Indigenous students of over 75%, was also one of Australia's largest providers of VET places to Indigenous peoples. Large scale VET provision to Indigenous peoples need not be a barrier to achieving excellent outcomes.

As shown in table 30, some 68% of TAFEs with fewer than 500 Indigenous students also had better than average Indigenous module pass rates. Yet almost two-thirds of TAFEs with large numbers of Indigenous students (i.e. at least 750 Indigenous VET students) also had much better than average Indigenous pass rates.

Table 30: The Indigenous module pass rates[a] of TAFE providers by size of provider

Size of TAFE provider	Proportion of TAFE providers with			
	Poor pass rate (%)	Medium pass rate (%)	Average or better pass rate (%)	Total (%)
Less than 500 ATSI students	16	16	68	100
500–749 ATSI students	0	50	50	100
750 or more ATSI students	38	0	62	100
Total	**25**	**13**	**62**	**100**

(a) A poor module pass rate was defined as being less than 45% of all module enrolments. A medium module pass rate was defined as being 45%–48.9%. An average or better pass rate was defined as being 49% or more

Source: National Centre for Vocational Eduation Research

As shown in table 31, there was also no clear link between TAFE size in terms of the number of Indigenous students and fail rates. High and low fail rates were reasonably evenly spread across both small and large TAFE institutes.

Table 31: The Indigenous module failure rates[a] of TAFE providers by size of provider

Size of TAFE provider	Proportion of TAFE providers with			
	Low fail rate (%)	Medium fail rate (%)	High fail rate (%)	Total (%)
Less than 500 ATSI students	43	14	43	100
500–749 ATSI students	0	0	100	100
750 or more ATSI students	43	14	43	100
Total	**38**	**12**	**50**	**100**

(a) A high module fail rate is defined as 13% or more of all module enrolments. A medium fail rate is defined as 8%–12.9%. A low fail rate is defined as being less than 8%.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

8 Indigenous student perspectives

Some information about the perspectives of Indigenous VET students was gained through a small student survey involving responses from 201 students in eight of the 16 TAFE institutes participating in the fieldwork for this study.

The survey was administered through the institute's Indigenous education units and is therefore largely a survey of Indigenous students who principally undertake VET special Indigenous courses. However, the survey was not designed to be representative of all such students, nor was it designed to be representative of Indigenous VET students overall. It was merely designed to provide some insights about the views of some Indigenous VET students.

A fascinating overall conclusion from the information presented below is that Indigenous student satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment and student support is high, irrespective of whether effective outcomes have been achieved.

The full results of the survey are presented in appendix 4.

8.1 Perspectives on the teaching and learning environment

An indication of the teaching and learning environment experienced by Indigenous students in the study is given in table 32. Over 80% of Indigenous students received classroom instruction, this being the most prevalent mode of delivery to VET students. Some 16% of Indigenous VET students received work-based instructions, usually as part of a program combining workplace and classroom training such as in a new apprenticeship. Some 18% reported involvement in the Indigenous community as part of their program, and just over 3% were involved in external or self-paced VET learning. Students could be in more than one of the above categories.

Table 32: Site of teaching and learning for Indigenous students

Teaching/learning environment	Proportion of students (%)
In classroom	81.1
At work	2.9
A combination of classroom and work-based instruction	13.1
In class and in the student's community	17.7
By external or self-paced learning	3.4
All modes[a]	100.0

(a) Students may be in more than one category

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Indigenous VET students experienced a diversity of styles of teaching, learning or instruction in VET, as shown in table 33.

Table 33: The styles of teaching/training experienced by Indigenous students

Type of teaching/training	Extent experienced (%)			
	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Total
Practical demonstrations by teacher/trainer/instructor	53.3	37.4	9.3	100.0
Practical activities undertaken by students	49.1	44.8	6.0	100.0
Discussions and group activities	67.9	26.1	6.0	100.0
Work-based activities	54.5	33.3	12.2	100.0
Computer-based exercises	35.5	33.6	30.8	100.0
Practical projects and assignments	46.0	38.1	15.9	100.0
Written projects and assignments	43.5	39.1	17.4	100.0

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Most Indigenous students frequently, or at least sometimes, experienced practical demonstrations from the trainer, undertook practical activity themselves, were involved in discussions and group activities and undertook practical and written projects and assignments required in the course.

Around 88% of Indigenous VET students in the study experienced some kind of work-based learning, with some 55% experiencing this on a regular or continuous basis as part of their VET program.

Surprisingly, almost one-third of Indigenous VET students in the study reported a complete absence of computer-based learning.

The methods of assessment experienced by Indigenous VET students in the study are shown in table 34. Again a variety of methods of assessing skills and knowledge were reported by Indigenous VET students in the study.

Table 34: Methods of assessment experienced by Indigenous students

Assessment instrument	Extent experienced (%)			
	Mostly	Sometimes	Never	Total
Written tests and exams	43.1	31.2	25.7	100.0
Instructor gives out practical projects which are assessed	52.2	35.7	12.2	100.0
Instructor asks questions and discusses answers	70.2	23.4	6.5	100.0
Portfolios of student work are assessed by instructor	47.8	42.6	9.6	100.0
Instructor observes work and assesses skills of student	41.0	28.6	30.4	100.0

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

The most frequently used VET assessment methods were oral assessment (i.e. questions and discussion of answers), assessment of practical projects or students providing portfolios of their work for assessment. Surprisingly, over one-quarter of students reported never being required to take written tests or exams.

Some indicators of overall satisfaction amongst Indigenous VET students with the teaching and learning environment they experienced in TAFE are given in table 35.

Table 35: Indicators of Indigenous student satisfaction with the teaching and learning environment

Indicator of satisfaction	Response		
	Yes	No	Total
Do you attend VET courses/programs regularly?	97.7	2.3	100.0
Does the style of teaching/training mostly suit your needs?	95.6	4.4	100.0
Did you find that teachers/trainers/instructors spend enough time with you concerning all the topics that need to be covered?	91.4	8.6	100.0

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Almost all Indigenous VET students reported regular attendance in their course or program. Some 96% of Indigenous students in the study said that the style of teaching/training in TAFE mostly suited their needs. Over 90% of Indigenous students also thought that their TAFE teachers/trainers/instructors spent enough time with them concerning all the topics that needed to be covered in their VET course or program.

While the study did not cover Indigenous students who had left or dropped out of their course, there is clearly a very high level of satisfaction amongst Indigenous students with the nature of the TAFE programs they are undertaking and with the teaching and learning environment that they experience.

8.2 Views about advice and the level of student support in TAFE institutes

Only half of the Indigenous students participating in the study reported receiving help from others in making their decisions about what kind of TAFE course or program to undertake, as shown in table 36.

Table 36: Source of advice or help provided to Indigenous students in choosing TAFE courses or modules

Category	Proportion of students (%)[a]
Proportion who received advice or help	*50.0*
If received advice or help, main source	
❖ Aboriginal support unit in TAFE	32.1
❖ Family member	43.2
❖ Community member	11.1
❖ Other sources such as schools, general TAFE, newspapers, radio etc.	18.5
All sources	100.0

(a) Students may be in more than one category

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

In those cases where outside help was received the most prevalent source of advice reported was from family members (43%). A further 11% also reported a community member as their main source of outside advice. Around one-third of Indigenous students who received outside help did so from the Indigenous support unit within a TAFE institute. Almost 20% reported other general sources such as the local school, the TAFE college itself or a TAFE helpline, newspapers, radios etc.

Indigenous students in the study were also asked to identify the various kinds of extra support they felt they needed to successfully complete their TAFE course or program. Their responses are shown in table 37.

Table 37: Support requirements of Indigenous students

Type of support needed	Proportion of students (%)		
	Yes	No	Total
What kind of support did you need to complete your studies successfully?			
❖ Extra classes/tuition in language/literacy/numeracy	22.2	77.8	100.0
❖ Extra time to complete projects/assignments	33.8	66.2	100.0
❖ Extra time with teacher/trainer to understand the subject	38.5	61.5	100.0
❖ Guidance and support from staff in the Aboriginal education unit of the college	42.5	57.5	100.0
❖ Guidance and support from people in the community	32.1	67.9	100.0
Did you get the kind of support you needed?	*90.2*	*9.8*	*100.0*

Source: Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research

Around one-third or more of Indigenous students identified extra time to complete projects or assignments and/or extra time with the teacher or the trainer to understand the subject.

Over one-quarter of Indigenous students reported the need for additional tuition in literacy and numeracy.

Over 40% of Indigenous students identified the guidance and support available from Indigenous education units within TAFE colleges as being critical, and one-third of students identified the support and guidance from family members or others in their community as being very important.

Most importantly, some 90% of Indigenous TAFE students in the study said they actually received the kind of support and guidance they felt they needed.

These results clearly show that there is also a high level of satisfaction amongst Indigenous students with the level of support and guidance they receive from TAFE institutes in which they are enrolled. Specialist Aboriginal education units and other Indigenous student support structures were an important part of that support and guidance for well over 40% of Indigenous TAFE students.

It is also clear that students highly value the guidance and support they receive from family members and others in their community.

9 Emerging themes and future directions

A number of critical themes have emerged from the VET-sector-wide analysis and the fieldwork conducted across TAFE institutes. Each of these themes are discussed below. We also draw out the implications that emerge from this for future directions in improving VET for Indigenous peoples in Australia.

9.1 Making access and participation in VET equitable

The most striking single issue about the experiences of Indigenous peoples in VET in Australia has been the relatively recent elimination of inequities in VET participation rates between Indigenous peoples and other Australians. Indeed the growth in Indigenous participation rates has been so rapid in very recent years that by 1998 Indigenous students made up almost 3% of the total VET student body, even though Indigenous peoples are only some 2% of the Australian population.

VET providers, most particularly TAFE institutes, have taken steps to encourage Indigenous access to their programs, and Indigenous peoples have responded by enrolling in record numbers across Australia. By 1998 almost 45 000 Indigenous peoples undertook a VET program of one kind or another. Indigenous participation in the VET sector has grown at a much stronger rate than Indigenous participation in other forms of post-compulsory education and training.

9.2 Establishing special institutional level arrangements to promote Indigenous VET participation and the importance of funding for special Indigenous initiatives

This trend has not *just* happened. Many changes in Indigenous communities and in the Australian community in general have contributed to changing attitudes. Most particularly there appears to be changing attitudes and heightened awareness within Indigenous communities about the opportunities available and benefits from undertaking education and training, particularly in VET.

Almost 90% of the TAFE institutes in our study had established a specific Indigenous organisation structure, usually an Indigenous or an Aboriginal education unit. These units offered specific programs for Indigenous students including some Stream 1000 and preparatory courses as well as a range of Stream 2000 courses particularly developed for Indigenous students.

Most institutes had an Indigenous education unit separate from general student support service units that existed to provide student support across the entire institute. In some institutes, the non-academic support functions for Indigenous students were the responsibility of teaching staff in the Indigenous education units.

Underpinning the significant increases in participation rates of Indigenous students since the launch of the AEP has been agreements between the Commonwealth Government and State/Territory governments which saw mainstream VET funding arrangements providing base funding for VET places for Indigenous VET students being (generally) comparable to that provided for other VET students. The Commonwealth provided, on a triennial basis, earmarked funding for special assistance in the form of supplementary and additional support measures for Indigenous students to achieve equity targets. This funding is provided under the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Indigenous Education Policy from the Indigenous Education Strategic Initiatives Program (IESIP). IESIP was formerly called the Aboriginal Education Strategic Initiatives Program (AEISIP).

The IESIP/AIESIP funding was primarily used to establish Indigenous/ Aboriginal education units in TAFE institutes to provide student support services and often some teaching to Indigenous students. Indigenous education units where they had any role in marketing and student enrolment were usually only responsible for publicity, recruitment and selection of 'special entry' students, academic support especially in literacy, numeracy and study skills, and social/cultural support services.

There can be no doubt, from the evidence arising from the fieldwork undertaken for this study, that Indigenous education units have been instrumental in increasing awareness of education and training options in Indigenous communities. They have created welcoming and secure physical and social spaces on campuses. They have enabled many students who lacked self-confidence and skills to be encouraged to access VET programs. They have developed specific literacy and Indigenous studies programs which have addressed particular learning needs of mainly Indigenous students.

All TAFE institutes have now created some sort of special arrangements (usually a special structure or unit of some kind) that attempts to provide a more accommodating environment for Indigenous students. This approach undoubtedly has contributed, at least in part, to the rapid growth we have seen in Indigenous participation in VET. Moreover, Commonwealth funding under IESIP has been fundamental to the creation of these arrangements at the institute level.

Continuation of such arrangements will be critical to the further development of new strategies at the institute level to improve the quality and relevance of VET for Indigenous peoples. The evidence from this study suggests that the establishment of a clear Indigenous presence in TAFE institutes has been of great significance to many of the Indigenous students who have elected to undertake a VET program.

9.3 Improving mechanisms for effective Indigenous decision-making

Many of the TAFE institutes surveyed were required by State or Territory authorities to establish an Indigenous advisory committee or equivalent, with terms of reference including provision of advice on VET needs of local Indigenous communities, recruitment, establishing priorities, monitoring and evaluating all Aboriginal programs and IESIP strategies. In fact this study showed that around 70% of TAFE institutes have established an Indigenous advisory committee of one kind or another.

The location and status of Indigenous advisory committees varied at different sites from being a standing committee of their TAFE Council with direct, formal access to senior management, to an advisory committee of a Faculty or School of Aboriginal Studies, to being a committee attached to the Indigenous education unit or support program. In some cases, these committees were established during a period of restructuring or re-accreditation, but later languished through lack of business, poor attendance, and inadequate support services.

Membership of such advisory committees tends to come from representative bodies such as the Commonwealth Department of Education, Training and Youth Affairs, Aboriginal Education Consultative Groups, the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Commission (ATSIC), and State/Territory education departments. Where they are serviced by Council, they have significant potential influence on priorities but can be regarded by Indigenous staff and students as remote and uninformed about the 'realities' on the ground. At several of the sites there was concern by Indigenous education unit staff about this, as well as 'some conflict between the aspirations of the advisory committee and senior management of the institute'. Advisory committees also typically had some community representation.

Alongside such formal arrangements for Indigenous participation in decision-making, most Indigenous education units have informal links into Indigenous communities through the role of unit managers and/or Indigenous liaison officers. In many cases, these staff have high profiles within communities and are highly regarded for their involvement. However, such community liaison work can attract criticism when it requires considerable time away from the campus.

Indigenous education unit staff, expected to be constantly available to students, can experience significant stress in meeting the demands of the community. The reliance of the institute as a whole on (usually junior) Indigenous staff to fulfil liaison, consultation and accountability functions in addition to other duties raises serious questions about the importance placed on these tasks by senior management.

While the fieldwork identified such participation in community affairs as fundamental to the development of relevant course offerings, there was some concern at the lack of integration of such informal community consultation with the formal processes of course design, accreditation, monitoring and evaluation. These processes are usually organised through academic structures which are often not directly linked to the operation of the Indigenous education unit.

In some cases, Indigenous staff were only consulted after the aims and direction of course review had been established by the teaching staff. That is, even where

teaching staff were very positive about the efforts of the Indigenous education unit, these units were seen as providing individual students with essential social, cultural and literacy support rather than as a professional arm of the institute able to contribute to the 'core business' of course design and evaluation. This difficulty is shared by most student support services which are seen as non-academic welfare operations. The move in higher education to locate these services within teaching and learning units or flexible learning centrés is intended to reinforce for students and academic staff that their professional skills and knowledge are integral to the provision of quality assurance in education.

One potentially significant source of advice and feedback on Indigenous participation within VET is the students (including those who withdrew) and recent graduates. Many Indigenous students are mature age and have important community positions. The most frequently nominated factor in surveys of how and why Indigenous students entered post-compulsory education is the recommendation of a family member or friend. Indigenous education programs rise and fall on their reputations within Indigenous networks. Placing greater value on the views of current and past Indigenous students offers a very powerful evaluation tool as well as an invaluable marketing strategy.

While Indigenous students are expected to provide evaluations of particular subjects as part of the normal quality control provisions of institutions, greater use can be made of their views. In particular, it appears that student evaluations are often required for particular modules when they are offered, but overall course evaluations, especially by graduates with the benefit of hindsight, are less routine and less used when available.

It is clear from our study that some re-thinking about the role of Indigenous advisory structures may be required. Now that the numbers of Indigenous students in VET are so much higher, a much greater involvement of current and/or recent Indigenous VET students and graduates in the advisory structure would appear to be warranted.

9.4 Broadening the Indigenous employment base within VET providers

Part of the process of creating a sense of place within TAFE institutes has been through the employment of Indigenous peoples as staff within the institutes.

The evidence presented in this report shows that Indigenous employment in VET had reached almost 2.0% of total employment in VET by 1996, a number which is commensurate with the overall proportion of Indigenous peoples in the Australian population. Supplementary assistance under the National Indigenous Education Policy has had a tremendous impact in boosting Indigenous staff levels in TAFE to this point in just a decade.

The evidence also shows that around half of all Indigenous staff are very heavily concentrated in Indigenous education worker/liaison officer positions, especially within Indigenous education units. Indigenous representation in VET teacher/trainee/instructor positions remains lower as do Indigenous numbers in management positions within VET providers.

There is a pressing need to change the balance so that proportionally more of the total Indigenous staff presence in TAFE and other VET providers are in teaching/trainer/instructor roles. Moreover, Indigenous roles in institute planning and management also need to be enhanced.

This is particularly important given the emphasis placed by the Indigenous students themselves on the quality of the teachers and trainers in being one of the key factors they identify as necessary for achieving success.

There are now a lot of Indigenous education workers in VET, especially in TAFE, who have some limited teaching roles in addition to their student support and community liaison roles. There may need to be an enhanced effort to develop deliberate policies, programs and strategies (that are funded) to train some of these workers for teaching or instructor positions.

9.5 Moving beyond the 'enclave' concept

There can be no doubt that establishment of an Indigenous presence in TAFE institutes has been extremely important to many Indigenous students. The establishment of Indigenous education units has created a visible sense of place with TAFE institutes that serves as a focal point for Indigenous students to meet each other and engage in cultural and social activities beyond the special Indigenous VET courses and student support offered by the units.

The importance of creating a sense of place with institutes where Indigenous students, and staff for that matter, feel comfortable should not be underrated.

However, the fieldwork conducted in this study does raise the issue of whether such a high level of concentration on special Indigenous VET programs (i.e. those designed especially for, and only open to, Indigenous students) and/or student support services mainly directed only at the students in those programs, continues to be the most appropriate way to meet the needs of most Indigenous students.

The majority of Indigenous students are now in mainstream VET programs (i.e. programs open to all students, Indigenous and non-Indigenous alike). It was clear from our study, however, that Indigenous education units are not reaching most of these students.

Relatively little information on TAFE student recruitment, application and selection processes, take-up of offers, induction procedures, and other aspects of VET accessibility for Indigenous students was available from the Indigenous education units in TAFE, AEU staff and others consulted in this research. This gap in information was especially marked for those Indigenous students enrolled in mainstream programs. Indigenous education units tended to have very little role beyond fielding some general enquiries in the process of Indigenous student entry to a TAFE institute. Their role tended to focus on student progress after enrolment and then, usually, mainly on students doing specific Indigenous courses.

It was not possible on the available data to link particular practices on the part of TAFE institutes or their Indigenous education units to participation rates or to module completion or pass rate outcomes for Indigenous VET students. Students across TAFE institutes of different sizes with respect to the numbers of

Indigenous students, and with varying levels of performance in terms of Indigenous pass rates, all reported good levels of satisfaction with the support provided within the Indigenous education units. Particular praise was accorded the informality, flexibility and cultural sensitivity of staff.

The actual teaching of students was often done by non-Indigenous staff who were appointed on the basis of their experience in Indigenous education. Support roles were often performed by Indigenous staff. There were indications from the fieldwork done in this study that continuity of staff, resulting in more experience and improved familiarity with the institute generally, as well as more developed teaching skills were associated with better than average outcomes. However, given that for any particular institute many or the majority of Indigenous students enrolled were in mainstream courses and therefore usually had little or no contact with the Indigenous education unit, interpretation of those associations are tenuous at least.

Staff responses were very mixed on the need to modify teaching styles to suit Indigenous students. Further, there was little agreement on what such modifications would specifically entail. Those programs which explicitly adopted specifically Indigenous styles did not produce better outcomes. Much of what was presented as specific teaching strategies for Indigenous students could be seen as basic good practice for all students, especially for adult learning. Students themselves were highly satisfied with the teaching/learning approaches they experienced, as discussed in chapter 8.

Paradoxically, as Indigenous participation rates in VET have increased rapidly over recent years, the Indigenous education units have had direct contact with a decreasing proportion of Indigenous VET students. In most of the institutes surveyed, a majority of Indigenous students now enter mainstream courses, and succeed or withdraw without seeking academic or other support from the Indigenous education unit.

Some of those interviewed suggested that those Indigenous students in mainstream programs who do not choose to access the Indigenous education unit do not need assistance. Of course, this may well be the case, at least in many situations. In a few instances, it was suggested that these students were reluctant to identify themselves openly as Aboriginal. However, institutes are funded on a per capita basis for IESIP purposes, and Indigenous education units have a duty of care for all Indigenous students. In some cases, however, the staffing levels and location of the Indigenous education unit makes contact with Indigenous students very difficult.

In some cases staff in Indigenous education units pointed out that institute student administration is slow to provide contact details for all Indigenous students. Moreover, the time of staff in Indigenous education units is often consumed by the day-to-day demands of those students who do make use of the services provided by the Indigenous education unit.

The flexibility, informality and caring attitudes of staff commented on so favourably by many Indigenous students may inhibit the time they have to take on more pro-active steps to identify and encourage all Indigenous students to seek assistance. Some Indigenous students may not need supplementary support, or may be well able to access mainstream support services, or get assistance from other students and staff. Nevertheless it is safe to assume that many Indigenous students, especially those in mainstream courses, would

benefit from Indigenous education unit assistance which they do not seek or which is not currently available because of institute administrative shortcomings or because Indigenous education unit staff are over-stretched.

However, from the evidence gathered in this study, there is considerable room for improvement in the collection and proper use of up-to-date and accurate information about Indigenous students at the institute level. Institutes should review the roles and responsibilities of the Indigenous education unit with regard to 'normal entry' Indigenous students. Greater effort needs to be made to identify and inform all Indigenous students about the support services available.

There does not appear to be any evidence to support the assumptions by some staff within Indigenous education units that only those students enrolling in special programs run by the units need other student support, especially specially designed support provided by Indigenous education units. Many Indigenous students enrolling in mainstream VET courses have experienced the same poor education opportunities, the same discrimination in getting access to employment, the same literacy difficulties and the same alienation that students enrolling in special programs have experienced.

These findings serve to emphasise the point that Indigenous education units and their TAFE institutes need to develop new arrangements and strategies to provide appropriate support to cover all Indigenous students in their institute, and not just those enrolling in special Indigenous courses or programs.

9.6 Clarifying the issue of the need for special teaching/ learning methods for Indigenous students

The conventional and orthodox theoretical view amongst educators in Australia has long been that Indigenous peoples require a specially developed pedogogy on the grounds that Indigenous peoples are more comfortable with practical learning approaches and have difficulty with the more theoretical, abstract or concept elements of learning. Some have criticised this sort of approach, arguing it to be racially discriminating and patronising, pointing instead to the need for learning environments that are more flexible and accommodating of the individual differences and preferences for different learning styles. The latter attributes the requirement for different learning styles to individual characteristics rather than to racial, ethnic or cultural characteristics being the main determinants of success with any particular approach to teaching and learning.

Teaching and instruction in TAFE has not been immune to this debate about the most appropriate teaching and learning styles for VET.

Students who responded to the questionnaire in this study were fairly consistent in preferring group work over individual study and lecture formats, partly because of peer support which they saw as culturally important. Many students felt that practical applications were better than more abstract or theoretical approaches to instruction. Some students preferred self-paced learning as better suiting domestic pressures and fluctuations, although this group was much smaller.

There was little discussion of distance education in the focus groups conducted as part of the fieldwork, although this mode of study offers many of the preferred features and can allow Indigenous peoples to study within their own communities. It also allows a much greater range of offerings than is viable in face-to-face teaching. Distance education can also make possible the efficient incorporation of Indigenous perspectives within curriculum where a single Indigenous curriculum consortium can service all VET providers in a State or even nationally.

Most Indigenous education unit staff were confident that Indigenous students were more successful in programs developed exclusively for Indigenous students and taught under enclave conditions. Some suggested that without their support many Indigenous students would abandon their studies. Participation in Indigenous education unit programs was frequently cited by Indigenous education unit staff as being valuable in terms of strengthening Indigenous identity and sense of community.

The available evidence from the 16 TAFE institutes in the study do not conclusively demonstrate greater success in specifically Indigenous courses. In fact the clear evidence to emerge was that staff in Indigenous education units did not have or use systematic information about student performance. The collection and regular use of accurate and detailed data is essential to enable staff to test their assumptions. In one site where this issue was explored in more detail, the module completion rates for Indigenous students in mainstream VET courses were about 6% below those of AEU courses. Given the different course requirements, and the presumably more certain employment benefits of mainstream courses, the significance of specific Indigenous programs in overall module success needs further examination within TAFE institutes.

Indigenous students participating in this study tended to describe preferred teacher characteristics rather than particular teaching styles. While they indicated preferences, for example, for group work and practical activities, teachers were rated according to their flexibility, caring attitudes, respectful manner, competence in the subject, and so on. Students responding to the questionnaire were generally very favourable in their reporting of teaching and support from staff. These desirable traits of teachers appeared to be more influential than either the ethnicity of staff, or whether they claimed to use 'Indigenous teaching styles'.

Staff working in the Indigenous education units held differing opinions about the need to modify teaching styles to suit Indigenous learners. Many staff claimed they did not alter their teaching for Indigenous students. However, some others did indicate this was necessary given the particular student backgrounds involved. A further complication was that some aspects of Indigenous student 'culture' were criticised as justifying disorganised or 'slack' attitudes and behaviours. Those who said they used particular approaches were often unspecific about actual strategies and methods. Others gave accounts which would be regarded as basic 'good practice' for adult learning across the board.

Clearly the verdict is still out on the vexed issue of what teaching and learning styles might be most appropriate for Indigenous students in TAFE. If anything, the evidence from the students in this study shows (reported in chapter 8) that most of the students participating in the survey were subject to a wide variety of teaching and learning styles covering the very practical through to the written project, and assignments focussed as much on the theoretical and the abstract.

The students themselves rated this variety of teaching and learning styles as mostly suiting their needs in 96% of cases, and, most importantly, 98% indicated they actually attended their VET courses/programs regularly.

The students who participated in the survey were mainly enrolled in programs and courses provided by Indigenous education units or in a mixture of these courses and mainstream VET courses. The strong message from them in this study is that a variety of teaching and learning methods are proving to be successful. Having flexibility in the approach and particular teaching/instructor characteristics are likely to be the most critical determinants of success amongst Indigenous students.

Canvassing the views of the Indigenous students themselves would appear to be a strategy that is an essential underpinning element to attempts by TAFE institutes and their Indigenous education units to further developing more appropriate approaches to meeting the diverse needs of the wide variety of Indigenous peoples (who are not an homogenous group) that now participate or seek to access TAFE courses and programs.

9.7 Shifting the focus to outcomes

The issue of what were 'successful outcomes' and what ways of measuring them should apply in Indigenous VET was frequently raised during the study. Some senior staff were adamant that simply relying on module or course pass rates as a measure of success was inappropriate. Staff in Indigenous education units often gave examples of learning and personal development which could not be discerned from outcome data.

All sites indicated the continuing impact of non-academic difficulties such as finance, housing problems and so on as major causes of course withdrawal, unsatisfactory progress in modules and other 'failures'.

Nevertheless, data on module outcomes are essential for any given institution for monitoring over time how its capacity to serve student needs is improving.

The assumption that Indigenous students inevitably experience VET as culturally alien or threatening ignores the enormous diversity of Indigenous situations and individual responses by the large number of Indigenous peoples from a very diverse range of backgrounds. As participation rates rise for all educational sectors, Indigenous students are much more likely to have family and friends who have undertaken tertiary studies. Without minimising the impact of 'cultural influences and social obligations', the tendency to overemphasise Indigenous difference and vulnerability also needs to be avoided.

The application of performance indicators, benchmarking and best practice to the arena of vocational education and training for Indigenous peoples is often treated with some scepticism and concern. A common argument that was raised in this study by staff in Indigenous education units is that best practice cannot quantify the intangible elements of Indigenous programs such as the interaction with teachers, staff, and other students, family responsibilities, and educational demands that determine whether or not a program is successful.

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These arguments imply that good performance can somehow only come at the expense of forsaking cultural and community obligations. However, this need not be the case if appropriate recognition is given to these factors.

In general, those Indigenous students who completed and submitted questionnaires in this study reported good to high levels of satisfaction with the support staff available in their institution. Student satisfaction and staff self-evaluation does not correlate with managers' judgements about the qualities of these staff or with outcomes being achieved. In fact we have been unable to establish a definitive connection between the levels of student satisfaction with support staff and the outcomes achieved by students in terms of completion or 'pass' rates.

In almost all cases, teaching and support staff interviewed were unaware, or inaccurate in their understandings, of the actual completion and pass rates for Indigenous students in their institution. This was just as true for the knowledge about the outcomes being achieved by students in special courses offered by Indigenous education units as it was for knowing about the outcomes achieved by Indigenous students in mainstream courses. This lack of information and, more seriously, misinformation makes evaluation very difficult and allows the perpetuation of inaccurate or unfounded beliefs about the vulnerability of Indigenous students, the effectiveness of support programs and the relevance of course offerings.

The overwhelming evidence in this report is that while Indigenous participation in VET has now surpassed the levels needed to reach equity, the outcomes remain at lower levels than those achieved by all VET students. Although the gap has narrowed considerably during the 1990s, Indigenous pass rates are lower and withdrawal and fail rates are higher.

The very clear evidence from this study is that monitoring the performance of Indigenous students and developing deliberate institute-wide strategies to help improve the outcomes attained by Indigenous students is either not part of the role of the Indigenous education unit or the other areas of the institute, or that it only occurs in a spasmodic fashion. Indigenous education units are focussed on access to VET, particularly to special programs and services, and little or no attention is given to improving outcomes and addressing attrition problems.

This problem is exacerbated by an attitude amongst some of the people within the Indigenous education units that to achieve good outcomes compromises cultural and social obligations of Indigenous students, meaning that for many the only real option is a special program.

Each institute needs to take particular steps to build in appropriate monitoring arrangements that do need to quantify performance outcomes and develop particular strategies for addressing poor pass rates and higher attrition. If these strategies are developed properly with the involvement of the Indigenous community, Indigenous education units and the students themselves, then they need not compromise any cultural or social beliefs of the students.

9.8 Creating the link to employment

This study has shown that the pattern of Indigenous enrolments in VET differ markedly from the national averages in their over-representation in basic skills

and preparation courses, and in humanities and 'multi-field' areas of study. Indigenous students are under-represented in areas like engineering, hospitality and other vocationally specific fields. Indigenous VET students are more likely to study full-time than other VET/TAFE students. They are less likely on average to have clear employment goals or be supported by an employer, even though the numbers in new apprenticeships have increased considerably in recent years.

Many staff commented on the need to improve the interaction with potential employers during study years. While employment is by far the most commonly given reason for studying recorded for this survey (68%), other surveys of Indigenous VET students have found that non-employment aspirations are also important.

While social and personal development outcomes are undoubtedly important, some of the Indigenous student comments to researchers carrying out the fieldwork in this study indicated that the prevailing values in some Indigenous education units meant that they were seen by some as the preferred outcomes.

The students themselves expressed a very high priority on the vocational aspects of their training.

Some of the institutions surveyed have attempted to follow-up students to ascertain the relevance of their VET learning to their work environment. Although this follow-up is at an informal level, there is considerable awareness of what past students are doing. However, formal follow-up is very difficult for college staff given the mobility of many ex-students and their lower employment participation rates. Formal follow-up graduate surveys do provide some useful data, but there is little evidence of their systematic use by institutes.

The fieldwork interviews done in this study also indicated that current training is itself seen as a 'job' by many Indigenous students. The training is also seen as providing qualifications for entry to a job. The importance of education and training for providing the basis for 'lifelong learning' or even the requisite skills, knowledge and problem-solving capacity to do a job are less clearly understood by some students.

The lower employment rates compared with all VET students that Indigenous VET students experience before, during and after undertaking a VET course or program means that much more attention needs to be given by institutes to the link between VET courses and job outcomes. Little if anything was being done in any institute to pro-actively canvass for job opportunities with employers upon graduation by Indigenous students.

There really needs to be a change in mindset amongst institutes and their Indigenous education structures to place very considerable importance on job outcomes. New and innovative approaches need to be developed to try and penetrate local labour markets with Indigenous students much better equipped with the skills actually needed in those labour markets.

The under-representation in small business programs is another example of where new emphasis is required, given the push in recent years for Indigenous groups to develop enterprises in their local areas in culturally relevant and appropriate ways.

There is also a need to integrate VET provision much better with workforce training for particular work in Indigenous communities and Indigenous

organisations including the work provided under the Community Development Employment Projects (CDEP) which is so important in many Indigenous communities. Several of the TAFE institutes in this study had initiated excellent programs which brought together VET students, local land councils, other Aboriginal enterprises and CDEP scheme participants to provide much more relevant VET programs. Further possibilities of this kind need to be explored.

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Appendix 1 — Project methodology

Introduction

The project team undertook:

- a thorough investigation of the statistics in the national VET collection as well as any relevant statistics from the Graduate Destination Survey
- an analysis of available literature on performance indicators and how to determine and measure outcomes in vocational education and training
- an analysis of available literature on factors that have contributed to the success of Indigenous students based on other case study work
- field work — studies of 16 TAFE institutes which included:
  - interviews with managers, teachers and support staff of Indigenous education units
  - interviews with other staff in the institutes
  - interviews/focus groups with students
  - a student questionnaire
  - interviews and questionnaire for institute management
  - interviews with course advisory groups/other prominent local Indigenous groups

Choice of TAFE institute sites for fieldwork

Following analysis of the provider level data relating to module completions, the project team selected 16 potential case study sites that represented a range of high and low achievers in terms of:

- level of Indigenous students intake (as a proportion of all students)
- level of withdrawal and continuing study rates and level of successful outcomes (as determined by course/unit completion rates and course/unit pass rates for Indigenous students)

The sample was also devised so that it included sites from all States and Territories and a range of city/country and high and low Indigenous population areas.

The 16 participating TAFE institutes are representative of TAFE institutes nationally but their identity is not disclosed in order to protect the identity of individuals who have participated in this study.

Phases of the project

The project was divided into nine phases as outlined below.

Phase 1: Initial activities

The consortium met with the project evaluator to:

- develop a working relationship
- discuss, explain and verify the methodology
- review areas of concern or areas needing special attention
- review documentation collected by the evaluator to provide a valuable starting point for, and clarify, the scope of the project
- identify Indigenous experts to be consulted in the project
- establish reporting requirements
- confirm detailed timelines

Phase 2: Overview and stage 1 analysis of available data

An analysis of NCVER's bank of available statistical data was carried out by NCVER. This analysis provided information about the participation of Indigenous students in the VET sector nationally. This included information about:

- training providers with suitable populations of Indigenous students
- graduates from larger programs
- institutes to enable the identification of the sites for the fieldwork part of the study

Data from the national VET statistics collection was analysed using a number of categories. These include age group, gender, highest school level completed, geographic area of disadvantage, employment category, disability, course and module completion, number of course curriculum hours, enrolments by course, field of study, stream of study, pass and fail rates, withdrawal rates, client load, and institute characteristics.

Phase 3: Literature review

The literature review included all relevant reports, reviews and policies relating to the participation of Indigenous people in the VET sector.

Phase 4: Interim report and workshop

An interim report was produced by NCVER describing information gained from the data analysis and the literature review.

This report formed the basis for a workshop held in November with NCVER and Yunggorendi staff to discuss and analyse the findings thus far, to inform and develop the research strategies for the remaining phases of the project.

Phase 5: Selection of sites and negotiation of access to sites for conduct of fieldwork

Based on information obtained in earlier phases, the consortium selected 16 sites for the conduct of fieldwork. Appropriate protocols for the fieldwork were negotiated by Professor Paul Hughes, Director of Yunggorendi. The sites selected were able to:

- demonstrate varying degrees of success in achieving desired outcomes for Indigenous students
- ensure each State and Territory was represented
- provide representation of the many and diverse Indigenous peoples of Australia where protocols had been negotiated

Phase 6: Development of issues for fieldwork and fieldwork schedules

From the interim report and workshop a set of issues were raised which formed the basis for the conduct of the fieldwork. A fieldwork schedule was developed to allow sufficient time for the piloting of questions before the case studies began. Interviews were conducted at each site with the campus management, Indigenous and non-Indigenous staff, and Indigenous students. These interviews were conducted either face to face or by telephone. They involved both individual and group processes.

Phase 7: Interviews and stage 2 data analysis

The Yunggorendi First Nations Centre for Higher Education and Research conducted the fieldwork under the direction of Professor Paul Hughes. All interviewers were Aboriginal people and were trained in appropriate methodology for this project. Information collected in the field was collated and analysed.

Phase 8: Reporting and guidelines for best practice

A draft report was developed in the June–September 1999 period which synthesises the information provided by the detailed data analysis, the literature review and the fieldwork. Where relevant, the draft report also drew on the results of related projects which were being completed by NCVER. The draft report was distributed to the project evaluator and project team for comment. The draft report was amended to produce this final report.

Phase 9: Publication and distribution of the report

This report, published by NCVER, is the completed output of the study.

Appendix 2 — Literature review

A review of research about Indigenous peoples in VET

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Preface

This review of literature aims to provide relevant findings from recent research into the outcomes Indigenous peoples want to achieve from VET and what constitutes good practice in providing education and training to Indigenous peoples. It provides background information and was a valuable resource for the members of the project team during the planning phase of the project.

The paper is structured as follows:

- Key themes that emerge from the literature
- Introduction to the aims of the Aboriginal Education Policy and a brief overview of achievements to data
- Description of the Australian National Training Authority approach to equity
- The Aboriginal view of how equity can be achieved
- Defining best practice and outcomes of Indigenous education and training
- Lessons from the research
- Conclusion
- References to literature review

Key themes that emerge from the literature

The major themes that emerge from this analysis of the literature are the importance of Indigenous identity, the importance of schooling, the importance of ensuring Indigenous culture is accommodated in the learning environment, and the importance of creating a supportive learning environment. The following quotes state these themes succinctly and forcefully and are included here by way of introduction to this review and as 'food for thought'.

> *Indigenous children have the right to all levels and forms of education of the State. All Indigenous peoples also have this right and the right to establish and control their educational systems and institutions providing education in their own languages, in a manner*

appropriate to their cultural methods of teaching and learning (Article 15 of the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

Indigenous peoples have the right to have the dignity and diversity of their cultures, traditions, histories and aspirations appropriately reflected in all forms of education and public information (Article 16 of the Draft United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples).

...improved access to employment and a fulfilling of the potential for development in Aboriginal communities will not only rely on reforms to post-secondary education and training arrangements, but also on the ability of schools to cater better for the needs of Aboriginal students (Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs 1985, p.197).

The difficulties faced by Aboriginal people in attempting to gain an education are not confined to low rates of participation. Aboriginal students frequently face discrimination and alienation within schools and other educational institutions and education is often not delivered in a way which fully meets the needs of Aboriginal people. Racism is a key factor in the alienation of Aboriginal people experienced within the various education institutions. Because of these and other adverse circumstances, the outcomes for Aboriginal people are substantially lower than for other Australian students (Aboriginal Education Policy Taskforce 1988, pp.1–2).

Without the general raising of Aboriginal basic education we cannot expect any significant shift in vocational outcomes (Lester 1994, p.54).

Aborigines should be free to choose not merely the content of the curriculum, but the media and teaching methods by which it is presented. The assumption that European procedures are inevitably superior is unwarranted (Coombs 1994, p.73).

Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment. Indeed, the influence of education dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables (Hunter 1996, p.12).

If the products of a State education system advantage a small proportion of the population over others, this must demand that the structure of the education, its pedagogical practices, the content of its curriculum and the relationships of different groups to that curriculum be subject to scrutiny (Sturman 1997, p.xii).

A learner's most pressing negative concerns need to be dealt with as a priority, in order to relieve stress and free energy for learning (quoted in Page et al. 1997, p.17).

Indigenous aspirations to achieve the skills and qualifications necessary to enable Indigenous peoples to take a full role in Australian society need to be met without requiring Indigenous people to forsake their communities or cultural heritage (Robinson & Bamblett 1998, p.x).

NATSIEP

In 1998 the Commonwealth and States and Territories agreed to develop jointly a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Education Policy (NATSIEP) in response to the level of Indigenous disadvantage as identified by a series of reports in the 1980s. These reports were the following: *Aboriginal education: House of Representatives Select Committee on Aboriginal Education, the Parliament of the Commonwealth of Australia* (Australia 1985); *Report of the Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs*, also known as the Miller report (Committee of Review of Aboriginal Employment and Training Programs 1985), *Report of the Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force*, also known as the Hughes report (Aboriginal Education Policy Task Force 1988).

The NATSIEP identified four key areas incorporating 21 long-term goals that needed to be addressed in order to overcome Indigenous educational disadvantage. The four key areas identified were:

1 involvement of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in educational decision-making

2 equality of access to educational services

3 equity of educational participation

4 equitable and appropriate educational outcomes

The Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody reinforced NATSIEP in its recommendations.

In response to the National Review of Education for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples: Final Report the Ministerial Council for Employment, Education, Training and Youth Affairs established a taskforce which produced the report *A National Strategy for the Education of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples 1996–2002* (MCEETYA 1995). This report aggregated the 21 goals into eight priorities:

1 to establish effective arrangements for the participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in education decision-making

2 to increase the number of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples employed in education and training

3 to ensure equitable access for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students to education and training services

4 to ensure participation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students in education and training

5 to ensure equitable and appropriate educational achievements for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students

6 to promote, maintain and support the teaching of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander studies, cultures and languages to all Indigenous and non-Indigenous students

7 to provide community development training services including proficiency in English literacy and numeracy for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander adults

8 to improve NATSIEP implementation, evaluation and resourcing arrangements

Reviews of Aboriginal educational policy

Robinson and Bamblett (1998) in reviewing the achievement of the Aboriginal Education Policy note that vastly increased numbers of Indigenous peoples are enrolling in, are staying on longer in, and are satisfactorily completing, education and training programs than ever before.

In 1996, almost 30% of Indigenous secondary students completed Year 12 (from a low base of 12.3% in 1989). In contrast, 74% of non-Indigenous students completed Year 12 in 1996 (Robinson & Bamblett 1998, p.17).

In 1997 over 38 500 Indigenous students were studying in VET programs, which amounts to 3.4% of all VET students (NCVER 1998, p.18). In 1986 there had been

3300 Indigenous students in TAFE which accounted for 0.3% of all TAFE students (Robinson & Bamblett 1998, p.3).

With regard to training outcomes, Robinson and Bamblett (1998, p.17) note that in 1996 about half of the modules (subjects) undertaken by Indigenous students resulted in a successful outcome (student assessed and passed). In contrast just over 60% of module enrolments by non-Indigenous students resulted in a pass. The issue that these authors find of interest is that Indigenous failure rates are not significantly higher than non-Indigenous failure rates, all being in the 4–6% range. The key differences between Indigenous and non-Indigenous module outcomes are that:

- much higher proportions of Indigenous students are continuing study from one year to the next and thus have not yet been assessed
- Indigenous withdrawal rates are higher

While acknowledging the achievements in Indigenous education since the Aboriginal Education Policy was developed, Robinson and Bamblett note that the following goals relating to equitable and appropriate outcomes still need attention:

- while educational outcomes for Indigenous students have improved, there is still a gap between Indigenous Australians and all Australians
- Indigenous employment rates are still lower than for all Australians — growth rates in Indigenous employment have only kept up with growth in size of Indigenous working population
- wage levels for Indigenous workers are still lower than for all Australians

With reference to employment outcomes, the TAFE Graduate Destination Survey data (1998) gives some indication of the employment and education outcomes being achieved by TAFE graduates. The survey involved sending a questionnaire to all 1997 graduates of TAFE institutes in Australia who completed at least 200 hours, or one semester, of training and had an Australian address as their usual address. A total of 66 607 graduates responded to the survey, of whom 1002 (1.5%) identified as being Indigenous.

The survey shows that, at 29 May 1998, 49% of Indigenous graduates were employed, 22% were unemployed and 28% were not in the labour force. The equivalent figures for non-Indigenous students were 73% employed, 14% unemployed and 13% not in the labour force.

The survey notes that graduates who received a trade qualification or higher level qualification were generally more likely to report being employed at 29 May 1998 than those who undertook a lower level certificate course. The survey also states that those whose study was in TAFE multi-field education or arts, humanities and social sciences were less likely to be in the labour force than those in other fields. The proportion of Indigenous graduates doing lower level certificate courses and TAFE multi-field education was substantially higher than non-Indigenous graduates: 35% of Indigenous graduates in the survey were doing AQF Certificate I and II courses and a further 22% were doing Certificate — not elsewhere classified. The comparable figures for all graduates were 18% (AQF Certificate I and II) and 16% Certificate — not elsewhere classified. With regard to multi-field education, almost 21% of Indigenous graduates did courses in this field of study, compared with 8% of all graduates. With regard to arts,

humanities and social sciences, 16% of Indigenous graduates did courses in this field of study, in contrast to 7% of all TAFE graduates.

To add more detail to the picture presented by Robinson and Bamblett and the Graduate Destination Survey, the following data is reported by ANTA (1998c):

- Indigenous students are clustered in training programs at lower end of qualification spectrum (34.7% in certificate not elsewhere classified)
- Indigenous clients well represented in traineeships (5.7%), but under-represented in apprenticeships (0.7%)
- Indigenous peoples have greater tendency to leave school early
- Indigenous peoples have lower levels of literacy and lower levels of educational attainment

Ball (1998) in her research on factors influencing the likelihood of success in VET concludes that people of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander descent have a significantly poorer chance of successfully completing a module than other Australians and a significantly poorer chance of successfully 'passing' a module in VET studies than other Australians.

The Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples' Training Advisory Council (ATSIPTAC) in its draft consultation paper *Partners in a learning culture* (1999) notes that on a range of indicators (employment, incarceration, retention and outcomes in VET) things are currently getting worse rather than better. With regard to incarceration Hunter and Schwab (1998) note that almost 50% of Indigenous males aged 20–24 have been arrested in the past five years.

Hunter and Schwab (1998) point out that in 1991 91.2% of Indigenous Australians over the age of 15 indicated they held no high school or other qualifications, compared with 69.6% for non-Indigenous Australians. Poor educational attainment, poor employment outcomes, low income and higher poverty are inextricably linked.

Buchanan and Egg (1996) in their report *Culture matters: Community report* acknowledge that while government policies for over 20 years have urged Australian education and training institutions to respond to the needs of Indigenous peoples and while Indigenous peoples participate more in education and training, we still need to learn more about factors that make a difference for Indigenous peoples.

> *We are only beginning to understand how to deliver education and training that both affirms the culture of Indigenous Australians and which results in quality outcomes in regard to employment* (Buchanan & Egg 1996, p.1).

ANTA's approach to equity

The Australian National Training Authority (ANTA) (1998a) in its document *A bridge to the future: Australia's national strategy for vocational education and training 1998–2003* has identified achieving equitable outcomes for all Australians as one of the five objectives in Australia's National Strategy for Vocational Education and Training 1998–2003. One of the specific priorities is increasing participation by Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in vocational education and training, particularly higher level award programs, improved retention and completion rates and improved employment outcomes.

The rationale behind this objective is 'the potential for education and training to improve people's life chances, and to give them security and satisfaction both in work and in life' has consequences for society as well as, importantly, for the individual. Increased productivity and self-reliance also produce broader economic and social advantages (ANTA 1998a, p.15). ANTA also views vocational education and training as critical in bridging the gaps between the information 'poor' and the information 'rich'.

In its support paper to the national strategy, *Achieving equitable outcomes*, ANTA (1998c) states that the policy view of equity is one which argues for a shift of emphasis away from solely focussing on 'target groups' towards a position which gives greater emphasis on measuring the capacity of the VET system to respond to the diverse needs of clients and potential clients. The aim of this ANTA paper is to be a starting point for discussion between all major stakeholders on how to increase equitable outcomes fromVET.

The paper is built on the premise that there are benefits to the individual and society of improving participation in, and outcomes from, education and training. These benefits are increased employment outcomes, raised levels of productivity and increased self-reliance through employment.

> *People with marketable skills and qualifications have better economic prospects and face less risk of long term unemployment than those who have no post school qualifications* (ANTA 1998c p.2).

ANTA views client group access and participation data as one of the most useful ways to measure the overall progress towards an inclusive VET system which over time will have a broader range of successful client outcomes.

Historically, the approach taken to improving equity was to supplement mainstream delivery with special equity programs. These programs intervened directly to address particular needs through support services, preparatory training programs or programs to deliver an extra layer of learning not required by other students.

Current approaches to equity policy

The current approaches to equity policy in the VET sector, which are commonly used, are social justice and managing diversity.

Social justice framework

The social justice framework concentrates on the broader range of life experiences and circumstances as well as the VET experience. There is recognition that economic, social, attitudinal, legislative and administrative factors may constitute impediments to equitable participation in VET. In this approach it is important to ensure that outcomes of education and training are not hindered by factors beyond the individual client's control or influence.

In this framework VET is a means through which to overcome social inequality. Underpinning this approach is the belief that all people should have access to the knowledge, skills and understanding they need to participate fully and successfully in the community. The social justice model supports government intervention and equity programs aimed at narrowing the differences in

education and training outcomes for specified groups. This approach allows for specific targeting of programs and resources, while taking less account of the market and individual client needs.

Managing diversity

Managing diversity is most commonly used as an approach to equity in the workplace. It stresses corporate responsibility to create and develop strategies and outcomes that are responsive to the needs of a diverse client base.

Managing diversity means that the system should reflect the diversity of its client base in its structures, personnel and employment practices and in the VET context to adjust teaching, training, learning and assessment to encompass difference. Development of an ethos of inclusiveness, respect for difference and the inclusion of people from a range of client groups in decision-making processes are major aspects of this approach.

How progress in VET is measured

Traditionally, progress towards achievement of equitable outcomes in VET is measured through participation rates of people from equity target groups. Now the approach is changing to include:

- outputs and outcomes (completions, qualifications, employment or further training)
- capacity of the system to respond to a diversity of clients

ANTA acknowledges that these measures do not indicate where improvements, or lack of improvements, have occurred in the VET system. Neither do they provide information on the capacity of the system to respond to the needs of clients. ANTA is yet to develop suitable methods of evaluation in relation to this aspect of performance.

> *As skills acquisition becomes increasingly important in gaining employment, vocational education and training will be of crucial* [importance] *to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples in providing basic skills and in assisting them to gain access to employment....Lack of culturally appropriate learning is considered to be a major cause of unsuccessful completions. Inadequate teacher and provider sensitivity to cultural differences, lack of teacher relations with students and their communities as well as language difficulties all contribute. Distance from providers is also critical in some rural and remote parts of Australia* (ANTA 1998c, p.13).

Robinson and Bamblett (1998) focus attention on the need to achieve appropriate outcomes. By this they mean Indigenous peoples gaining qualifications, knowledge and skills necessary to maximise potential and play a full role in the life of their community and wider society.

ATSIPTAC has been developing a National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Strategy for VET which will be a complementary document to the ANTA national strategy. In its draft document an additional four objectives for VET are identified: regional economic and community development and sustainability, lifelong learning, cultural affirmation, self-determination and community choice and reconciliation. The key performance measures suggested for these objectives were:

- investment levels in Indigenous community development and industries by region

- proportion of Indigenous peoples who acquire independent lifelong learning skills post VET
- levels of Indigenous cultural practice and community choice within VET
- levels of commitment to partnerships and reconciliation between government, providers, industry and community

In its draft strategy ATSIPTAC made the point that land, identity, language, literacy and a sense of self are crucial if Indigenous peoples are to be included in lifelong learning, wider society and the world of work.

Aboriginal view of how to achieve equity

ATSIPTAC in its draft consultation paper *Partners in a learning culture* states:

> *Culture, literacy, identity and language must be 'wrapped up with' vocational learning in order to achieve outcomes that are valued by and valuable to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities and peoples in the world of work and to all Australians* (p.8).

This theme is reflected and expanded in the work of the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers (FIAEP); (Boughton 1998; Beetson 1997; Ah Chee et al. 1997). These writers make the point that education and training cannot be separated from issues such as land needs, Aboriginal health and life expectancy, employment and economic development, language and culture maintenance. Moreover the history of the Indigenous community cannot be ignored in the development of an education and training system that reflects Indigenous aspirations and goals.

Beetson (1997) makes the point that although the government has been committed to education equality and although there have been increases in participation rates, the fundamental reality of Aboriginal peoples has changed very little.

> *If our education is conceived as simply something we can get from the non-Indigenous mainstream system, by increasing our access and participation, then education will remain what it has been for us over 200 years, a continuation of our colonisation* (Beetson 1997, p.2).

The VET system is aiming at providing VET to meet the demands of a globalised economy in which growth 'is led by urban-based services and technology-intensive industries' (Boughton 1998, p.17). Boughton questions whether the VET system with its current focus on globalisation can meet the specific education and training needs of Indigenous communities.

Although Aboriginal people now participate in VET at the same, or even greater, frequency than the non-Aboriginal population, the bulk of enrolments are in catch-up and pre-vocational employment. Aboriginal participation in trade and para-professional courses remains significantly below average.

This section provides an insight in the views of Boughton and Aboriginal researchers on:

- factors to be considered when discussing equity
- a critique of the current strategy
- an alternative framework for developing VET strategy
- Aboriginal education

Factors to be considered when discussing equity

Boughton declares that any strategy that sets percentage increases in qualifications, successful completion rates and development of competencies and curriculum which are not socially, culturally and linguistically inclusive will fail — it will not make the difference needed because Indigenous peoples' patterns of employment and unemployment are not due simply to lack of 'mainstream' skills or qualifications but arise from a number of inter-related factors including:

- the historical influences of past education and employment practices
- extreme under-development of most Aboriginal communities
- lack of sufficient support for Indigenous peoples' own development aspirations connected to the land and localities where they live

Schwab (1996) also stated that Indigenous Australians make educational decisions that are underpinned by historical, social and cultural difference.

Boughton references the many studies that identify the following themes as being central to Aboriginal communities:

- the continuing importance of subsistence-style economic activity, especially in non-urban areas
- the importance of community-based employment and of part-time and full-time voluntary work
- the existence of alternative Indigenous development pathways and models
- the centrality of land and land management issues to Indigenous development strategies
- the existence of distinct regional economies and labour markets
- the value of regional development planning

> *Education and training programs have to be linked to local and regional development strategies and priorities and these, in turn, require support from major players in the economy, including both government and private sector...There is strong historical evidence to suggest that when development strategies decided at the national (and international) levels run counter to local and regional needs, and education and training strategies are determined by these, problems of unemployment and underdevelopment remain unsolved, no matter how much training people undertake* (Boughton 1998, p.12).

Critique of current strategy

Boughton argues that this suggests the need for an alternative approach to VET research and provision in relation to Aboriginal communities. The current strategy being pursued by ANTA is, according to Boughton, to define Aboriginal non-participation in mainstream VET and labour markets as the problem and then to develop strategies to remove 'barriers to participation'.

Boughton puts forward the alternative view that it is the mainstream that is the problem and the fact that Indigenous peoples are not participating is a measure of the system's lack of relevance to the development needs and aspirations of Indigenous communities. He suggests that this approach is a useful starting point for identifying alternative VET pathways for Indigenous peoples. It also helps remind researchers and policy-makers of the cross-cultural difficulties inherent in applying non-Indigenous standards to the measurement of

Indigenous peoples' 'disadvantage'. This is a comment about the approach to equity. Boughton argues for a managing diversity approach to equity to be used across the whole community, not just the workplace.

Boughton states the disadvantage experienced by Aboriginal people — that is, their low participation in the labour force, relative to non-Indigenous people — has more to do with:

- demise of rural industries in which Aboriginal people traditionally found employment
- Aboriginal people's unwillingness to give up even more of their own languages and cultures and move even further from their lands to the urban settings to get work and an education more in keeping with 1990s mainstream Australian economic development
- the fact that today's VET system has changed in recent times to better reflect the changing needs of industry — but these changes have helped to create the rising Aboriginal unemployment in the first place

Boughton believes it is naive to have the view that if the people in Aboriginal communities had the same skills and qualifications profiles as the rest of the population then they would also enjoy the same rates of employment and income. Boughton argues that the VET system itself is a major institutional contributor to 'the occupations and industrial mismatch between the mainstream economy's demand for labour and the characteristics skills and inclination of Indigenous job seekers'.

ATSIPTAC (1998) observes that Indigenous peoples, like some other Australians, are at a disadvantage in terms of prior education and training, formal English literacy, employment status, isolation, disability and incarceration and they make the important point that:

> *While it is irrefutable that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people remain the most disadvantaged single group in Australia on a number of social and economic criteria, it is not being Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander which is disadvantaging in itself. Rather, it is that Indigenous people are more likely to be subject to a wide range of disadvantage factors and therefore experience multiple disadvantages* (p.4).

An alternative framework

Boughton puts forward what he calls a more appropriate framework for developing a VET strategy for Indigenous peoples — a framework based on economic, social, political and cultural development perspectives rather than the 'simple pursuit of statistical parity'.

Boughton summarises thus:

- There needs to be more scrutiny of what this term 'disadvantaged' means and more attention paid to the diversity of the Indigenous peoples, the importance of land and location to the needs of the people, the role of paid and unpaid work which people are already doing in their own communities.
- We need to include historical analysis of development processes which have led to Aboriginal unemployment and poverty — especially restructuring of rural economies.
- It is assumed that for Aboriginal people to fit themselves into a restructured economy of the 1990s, they need more vocational education and training. However, this does

not take into account that this would require people to move off their own lands in greater numbers.

- Indigenous organisations play a key role in promoting alternative education, training and development pathways for their communities.
- There has been no attention paid to development of mechanisms for regional planning and decision-making by Aboriginal people themselves or ways that VET provision could be improved if VET planning was more integrated with these regional Indigenous processes.
- The current model of provision of VET appears to run directly in contrast to the interests of the majority of Indigenous communities.

Boughton suggests that we need:

- to disaggregate the national and State data on which most strategies and policy directions are based and pay much closer attention to the historically specific conditions of particular localities and regions
- urgent review and evaluation of current strategies based on centralised national goals and topdown industry-driven programs
- closer study of CDEP and the part it can play in providing pathways to employment and further education and training
- to pay attention to regional agreements and the scope that these offer for alternative models of service provisions
- local and regional studies carried out in partnership with Indigenous community-controlled organisations to identify alternative pathways into education, training and employment which are consistent with communities' own development aspirations

Boughton quotes Hughes (1988):

> *the most challenging issue of all is to ensure education is available to all Aboriginal people in a manner that reinforces rather than suppresses their unique cultural identity. The imposition on Aboriginal people of an education system developed to meet the needs of the majority cultural group does not achieve this* (AEP Task Force 1988, p.2).

Aboriginal education

Ah Chee et al. (1997) draw the distinction between Aboriginal education which is the type of education provided by colleges in the Federation of Independent Aboriginal Education Providers and education for Aborigines which is what the mainstream offers. According to Ah Chee et al. Aboriginal education has the following features:

1. Aboriginal education reflects and maintains the cultures, values and knowledge of our peoples — peoples who have a history that goes back 50 000 years or more.
2. Aboriginal education and Aboriginal self-determination cannot be separated. Genuine Aboriginal education only happens when Aboriginal people have real power over the education process.
3. Aboriginal education is firmly based in the real day-to-day experiences of the students and communities — no one is turned away. Aboriginal programs are designed to work with our people where they are at, in this terrible reality (unemployment, poor housing, third world health standards, alcohol and drug abuse, imprisonment, violence).
4. No separation of adult education as mainstream does into separate institutions for academic subjects, separate institutions for vocational courses and community

centres for non-formal education. Programs provided by colleges in the Federation range from life skills and adult basic education programs, through employment-related and vocational education and training to higher education courses. This is an holistic education.

5 The education provided by the FIAEP builds the capacity of the communities to exercise their right of self-determination and to develop the way they want to. (Mainstream sees Aboriginal participation as an access and equity issue.)

6 FIAEP asserts its right to be treated as a separate and independent sector of the Australian education system.

Ah Chee et al. (1997) quotes from the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody which concluded that the mainstream education system had been unable or unwilling to accommodate many of the values, attitudes, codes and institutions of Aboriginal society.

These features are found in the Aboriginal Community Controlled Colleges. Durnan and Boughton (1999) have undertaken a research project to examine the outcomes that Indigenous students in these colleges are achieving. This study provides quantitative evidence of the special and unique contribution that the independent Aboriginal community-controlled sector makes to Indigenous peoples' vocational education and training. The study demonstrates the sector has produced impressive outcomes for Indigenous students choosing a VET course in an Indigenous community-controlled learning environment.

What is best practice in Indigenous education?

The themes which Boughton and Durnan (1997) identified when reviewing the literature on best practice were:

- Definitions of best practice vary according to what are defined as the most desirable outcomes and who is doing the defining.
- How should educational equity be defined? Is it statistical equality as measured by access, participation, outcomes, or more qualitative measures which are rights-based and which reflect international standards?
- Outcomes which many Aboriginal people seek from education include better health and living standards in their communities, greater control over their lives (these are unlikely to come from education and training programs which are developed to suit the different aspirations, needs and previous educational histories of non-Aboriginal clients).
- Indigenous peoples' own organisations play a key role in improving health, education, employment, land and resource management, and economic independence.
- Education practitioners and policy-makers risk being ineffective and unjust if they fail to take account of the complex inter-relationships between education, learning, identity and the maintenance and reproduction of cultures.

In order to define best practice, the two questions to be answered are:

- who are the stakeholders: best for whom?
- what are their expectations or goals: best for what?

Thus this section incorporates:

- review of the range of outcomes
- summary of best practice in the Aboriginal community-controlled sector

Review of the range of outcomes

A discussion of best practice must include an understanding of outcomes and how best practice is measured.

Buchanan and Egg (1996) interpret 'outcomes' to mean the practical result of a course — for example, getting a job or gaining entry to university or gaining skills to work in the community. They identify four types of outcomes:

- employment-related outcomes
- knowledge-related outcomes
- community-related outcomes
- personal and social outcomes

At present the VET system measures success in terms of employment-related outcomes and to some extent knowledge-related/education outcomes by reporting on numbers of graduates who gain jobs, how quickly they gain their jobs, what incomes they are earning, number of modules completed and number of qualifications gained. The system does not measure community-related, personal or social outcomes.

Social indicators that are a result of better education provision may include:

- better employment outcomes
- reduced likelihood of arrest or incarceration
- reduction in suicide/violent crime rate
- reduction in level of alcoholism/drug addiction rates

Teasdale and Teasdale (1996) state that in addition to vocational aspirations, Aboriginal adults may wish to participate in education and training so as to be involved with their peers, to be seen as role models for the next generation or to help their children and grandchildren with homework.

Sykes (1986), quoted in Gude and Pascua-McGlew (1997), identified the following as successful outcomes of education for Aboriginal people:

- survival of Aboriginal people as the greatest achievement to date
- ability to retain Aboriginal identity
- remaining in the community
- self-determination
- restoration and management of land

Schwab (1996) notes that most Indigenous peoples are still catching up, and employment as a result of training may not be high on the agenda of those Indigenous students. Schwab quotes data from the 1994 National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Survey which showed that 24.6% of Indigenous peoples who attended a training course do so in order to get a job. In contrast 30.7% attended such courses for personal development.

ATSIPTAC (1999) makes the point that VET and paid work are two outcomes sought by Indigenous peoples from learning. The other two equally important outcomes are Indigenous culture and a desire to determine and improve the future.

Thus best practice Aboriginal adult education is defined by some writers not only in terms of its contribution to educational equity but also by how well it contributes to overcoming disadvantage in employment, health, levels of arrest and imprisonment.

> *It is clear that simple statistical equality on measures such as skills gained, competencies achieved, modules completed or qualifications received do not begin to capture the range of aspirations and expectations that different groups of Aboriginal students, let alone their families and communities, bring to their education* (Boughton & Durnan 1997, p.9 of 29).

In the report Djama and VET (1998), the authors state:

> *As well as employment-related outcomes and knowledge-based outcomes, Aboriginal people also value community, personal and social outcomes. In not recognising these additional outcomes, the national system of training fails to affirm the diversity of its client group and the nature of the labour market in remote communities* (p.22).

Sturman (1997) quotes researchers who warn that educational goals which are phrased in terms of 'sensitive' and 'effective' education that 'accommodates cultural difference' are at odds with goals such as the knowledge and competencies for a 'late-capitalist information economy'.

Sturman also draws attention in the literature to two views of how to measure or assess success of educational programs:

- on the one hand is the stress on measurement of outcomes through performance indicators related to mainstream Australian society which are based on principles of economic efficiency and cost-effective service delivery. This could be referred to as the corporate approach or the economic rationalist approach
- on the other hand are those who believe that attempts to evaluate effectiveness of programs should avoid using the same criteria applied to mainstream programs and should refer to aspects of self-esteem, cultural enrichment and personal satisfaction

One of the authors of the Royal Commission into Aboriginal Deaths in Custody noted that economic thinking and employment opportunities dominated government thinking on Aboriginal adult education and wrote:

> *Whilst I acknowledge the importance of programs specifically targeting opportunities in employment and economic development, I suggest that such a view of education is too limited. There are many avenues of education, which, whilst not directly geared to the labour market, are a significant source of skills and self-esteem for Aboriginal people…Such programs have enormous potential for improving the quality of Aboriginal people's lives, as well as building their confidence to go on to formal education or employment, if they so desire* (p.341).

The theme throughout the literature is that the way the VET system measures performance should reflect the diversity of the aspirations and needs of the

Aboriginal communities and therefore should include appropriate measures of Aboriginal achievement.

> *It is also vital that best practice in VET recognises the importance of self-defined community and personal development goals* (ATSIPTAC 1999, p.5).

Best practice in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges

Beetson (1997) states that the alternative to the mainstream education system is the Aboriginal community-controlled adult colleges. These colleges are built around a model which:

- enables the community to exercise its right of self-determination which involves consultation and negotiation to make decisions in a way which reflects Aboriginal traditions and protocols (although he notes that this is limited by funding agreements, performance indicators and so on)
- affirms Aboriginality and Aboriginal identities in all their rich diversity instead of making Aboriginality a series of problems which education has to come to terms with
- provides an education which aims not at the advancement of individuals but at the development of each person along with and at the same time as the development of his and her family and community
- builds on ways Aboriginal people have always used to educate and develops its own theories and practices of learning and teaching — its own pedagogy

At present there are seven full members of the Federation:

- Tranby Aboriginal Cooperative College, Sydney
- Tuondi College, Adelaide
- Institute for Aboriginal Development in Alice Springs
- Aboriginal Dance Theatre, Redfern
- National Aboriginal and Islander Skills Development Association
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Corporation for Health Education and Training, Brisbane
- Butucarbin Aboriginal Corporation, New South Wales

Programs offered at these colleges include life skills, adult basic education programs, employment-related and vocational education training and higher education courses.

The Federation is based on the fundamental right of Indigenous peoples to control their own education. The Federation is funded by the Commonwealth and the States, but is separate from the public TAFE system and the non-Indigenous ACE sector. All members of the Federation are registered private community (non-profit) providers of vocational education and training.

What is thought to be best practice in Aboriginal Community Colleges is relevant here for two reasons:

- firstly, can any such practices be identified as operating in mainstream VET institutions?
- secondly, can they be linked to higher levels of participation and/or better outcomes for Indigenous students?

The best practice guidelines in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges

Boughton and Durnan (1999) identify best practice in Aboriginal community-controlled colleges as follows:

1 The provider is an independent Aboriginal community-controlled organisation — i.e. its governing body is subject to Aboriginal community control; it is recognised as such by the communities in which it works and it is non-profit.

2 The organisation aspires to achieve to the maximum degree possible the right of Aboriginal self-determination in education as expressed in the UN Draft Declaration of the Rights of Indigenous Peoples and it actively advocates for this position in relation to non-Aboriginal education authorities.

3 Members of the Aboriginal community are actively involved in the management of the organisation at all levels and all aspects of its work and in all positions of authority where decisions are made include the governing body, at senior management level, at program coordinator level, in teaching positions, in support services, in administration on course advisory and development committees.

4 Decision-making at all levels within the organisation follows Aboriginal processes and protocols, recognising the need for respect, time to reflect and consensus.

5 The organisation is a resource place for Aboriginal peoples and maintains an 'open-door' policy towards all Aboriginal community members.

6 Education and training programs are provided according to community needs, as identified by the community, to achieve outcomes to which the community aspires, including personal, family and community development.

7 Education is provided in an holistic manner, which affirms Aboriginal culture(s) and identity(ies) as the core components of the curriculum.

8 The design, delivery and assessment of education and training programs occur always in ways which respect Aboriginal law and custom, and the diversity of Aboriginal students' experiences and aspirations.

9 Community members are involved wherever possible in teaching and assessment in recognition that the community is where the real knowledge and expertise lies in Aboriginal education.

10 The organisation seeks to develop Aboriginal curriculum, not just to adapt or modify non-Aboriginal curriculum.

11 The organisation supports and advocates the right of self-accreditation of Aboriginal education programs by Aboriginal communities, according to standards set by Aboriginal communities.

12 The organisation respects and affirms the community's right of ownership over the knowledge transmitted through the curriculum, which it holds in trust for the community.

13 Teaching, learning and assessment are integrated to the maximum extent possible with the social and cultural life of the community and its struggles.

14 Industrial awards and agreements covering staff and policies in relation to students take account of family, community and cultural obligations as a legitimate and important part of Aboriginal education.

Lessons from the research

There is a range of literature identifying what aspects of training programs contribute to successful outcomes for Indigenous peoples and what are the barriers to successful outcomes. A theme that is common to all is the impact of what the school sector provides to Indigenous students. Outcomes in the VET sector cannot be viewed as separate from what happens at school and this cannot be viewed in isolation from the community and society at large. An holistic approach is integral to identifying what constitutes good practice.

Sturman (1997) in his work on social justice in education quotes research in the school sector which shows that:

- Aboriginal students have lower levels of literacy and numeracy
- Aboriginal students are less successful in schooling
- teachers have lower expectations of Aboriginal students
- Aboriginal students have different patterns of subject/course participation in Years 11-12
- Aboriginal students seem more dissatisfied with their school experience
- Aboriginal students have greater language difficulties
- Aboriginal students have lower educational and vocational aspirations

Many of the Aboriginal students who come into VET at some stage after school will come in with these characteristics. Those who tend to achieve academically are those Aboriginal students whose strong and growing sense of identity is supported and recognised by the school. Furthermore, when talking about Aboriginal people, Sturman draws attention to the fact that research and policy tend to group all Aboriginal students together with occasionally the distinction between rural and urban students, or the distinction between traditional and non-traditional Aboriginal people being made. The reality, however, is that there are many identities — there is not an 'amorphous pan-Aboriginal identity' but lots of separate and distinctive local identities.

With regard to the level of schooling completed by Indigenous peoples, Hunter (1996) states that education variables are the largest single factor influencing Indigenous employment:

> *Education is the largest single factor associated with the current poor outcomes for Indigenous employment. Indeed, the influence of education dwarfs the influence of most demography, geography and social variables* (Hunter 1996, p.12).

The information to follow is drawn from recent studies involving case study research which identifies:

- the experience of Indigenous students in mainstream institutions
- the link between language and literacy levels and the achievement of outcomes
- best practice principles for providing training to Indigenous peoples in remote and rural Australia
- why flexible delivery is suited to Indigenous learning
- Indigenous students' perceptions of their learning experience

Experience of Indigenous students in mainstream institutions

Research conducted by the Research Centre for Vocational Education and Training at the University of Technology, Sydney (McIntyre et al. 1996) explored how educational institutions were accommodating Aboriginal culture and identified how Aboriginal students were experiencing their courses in mainstream institutions. Interviews were conducted in TAFE colleges, independent Aboriginal providers and in universities.

The findings of research conducted by McIntyre et al. (1996) suggest that positive VET outcomes are the result of achieving effectiveness in two areas:

- course delivery being cross-cultural
- courses focussing on both the cultural appropriateness of the program and on the effectiveness with which the program is delivered

With regard to course delivery, the researchers suggest that each of the following factors need to be negotiated with Aboriginal people:

- how the institution relates to the community
- how the program is supported by the institution
- how the course delivery is managed to ensure cultural relevance and effectiveness

All parts of the course — including teaching, learning, assessment and support — must be culturally appropriate.

McIntyre et al. (1996) put forward key principles as a way to improve course delivery for Indigenous Australians.

These can be elaborated as:

- recognising that education and training is a cultural response. When Indigenous learners choose a course, community benefit is often considered with personal goals and employment needs
- making space for Aboriginality within an institution:
  - institutions need to accept that effective course delivery recognises Aboriginal culture and identity at every stage of the educational experience. Lack of understanding by staff can often result in failure and withdrawal
  - involvement of Aboriginal teaching administrators, teachers, tutors and support staff is appreciated
  - learners want Aboriginal perspective in course content for Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal students
  - students give high value to studying together and to Aboriginal units in universities
  - dedication of physical spaces for the display of cultural artifacts was also important
- involving Aboriginal communities in course delivery to ensure more positive outcomes:
  - involve Aboriginal staff and Indigenous Australian peoples in learning experiences
  - frame the content of the course in terms of Aboriginal perspectives
- being flexible and negotiating appropriate teaching and learning:
  - courses should highlight that learning involves moving between two cultures

- students want to negotiate course requirements with staff, particularly when commitments to family, community and work may create personal difficulties
- teachers should draw on the experiences of their students in relation to work or community issues in teaching a subject
- teachers who were non-judgmental, supportive, patient and open to learning from students were most appreciated

- recognising that a range of support is needed — for example, tutoring, counselling, learning and assessment strategies and integrated study skills. Family and community support is essential to continuing participation and successful work
- making language and literacy part of course delivery — they should be built into vocational courses, not only be taught in preparatory and general courses. A balance has to be found between recognising Aboriginal languages and a focus on learning English language and literacy skills
- evaluating the effectiveness of each part of the system of course delivery — this means not only course design, teaching and assessment but also course promotion, entry, induction, staffing and professional and support services

Research in the higher education sector (Bourke et al. 1996) also found that many Indigenous students succeed as a result of strong support services and with the benefit of positive and helpful staff. Bourke reports that more than half the students in this study who dropped out of higher education study did so because they felt unwelcome. Other reasons included lack of relevance of the course and inadequate career counselling.

The link between language and literacy levels and achievement of outcomes

A number of studies have focussed on the importance of literacy in any discussion on improving outcomes for Indigenous peoples. Hunter and Schwab (1998) state that improving adult language skills could well provide an important approach to improving Indigenous education outcomes in terms of qualifications. This focus on the importance of language and literacy is echoed in the following research:

- The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (1994)
- Tertiary Preparatory Courses in NSW (Lester 1994)
- McIntyre et al. (1996) notes the importance of language and literacy stating:

  not much is known about the links of literacy with educational outcomes for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, although it is well understood that literacy levels influence the way social advantage and disadvantage are constructed and maintained (p.16).

The NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group

NSW Aboriginal Education Consultative Group (1994) in its report *On the same level* published case studies that documented successful adult education programs focussing on literacy and numeracy in Koori communities.

The success factors identified in this research were:

- Kooris learning in groups
- supportive, approachable, flexible teachers
- Kooris involved in the management of the program
- Koori support staff
- appropriate venues and environment
- local focus in Aboriginal studies
- adequate and appropriate resourcing
- student/teacher relationships being open and friendly, a partnership of equals
- high levels of student input into the program

Tertiary preparatory courses in NSW

Lester (1994) argues that to effectively improve Aboriginal training outcomes, Aborigines need to be pioneering innovative programs, which will not only improve the situation for Aborigines but for society as a whole. He refers particularly to the tertiary preparatory courses conducted in New South Wales. TAFE NSW graduated more students from its tertiary preparatory courses than schools graduated from the HSC. In addition TAFE's outcomes from these courses were more productive in terms of further education options and vocational outcomes.

> *I have witnessed whole communities being empowered through very successful TAFE programs which initially addressed literacy needs, and as students progressed moved them through general education into tertiary preparatory courses. Again, I believe that Aborigines pioneered these programs which now meet mainstream provision needs* (p.54).

Lester believes that:

- general education programs need to ensure that they are intrinsically linked with vocational outcomes
- Aboriginal studies which assist in building self-esteem and understanding of traditional and contemporary backgrounds must be integral to course design
- literacy levels of Aborigines need to be improved if initiatives in competency-based training and self-paced delivery are to be effective

Lester identifies three factors which have an influence on Aboriginal people opting to undertake studies at TAFE:

- The availability of stream 1000 courses (personal enrichment and recreation courses)

  Lester states that Aboriginal people need to control the type and nature of training provided in their communities. Because there is a level of distrust of TAFE which is seen as another imposing government department, some communities will purposely opt for Stream 1000 programs as a testing process. These courses provide a basis to test the genuineness and capacity of the provider to relate to the community. TAFE must maintain options in the Stream 1000 courses to satisfy these initial contacts into communities (Lester 1994, p.56).

  > *(Stream 1000 programs) provide an initial important step in a process of building trust and developing a training agenda within communities* (p.57).

- The role of Aboriginal training teachers facilitators

  Effective delivery depends on the level of control maintained by the Aboriginal community itself. The best way to achieve this is by implementing a program to develop Aboriginal training teacher facilitators from within various culture and language groups. Such teachers require:

  - bilingual skills with English as a second language
  - bilingual skills in literacy and numeracy
  - the capacity to facilitate further vocational training as requested by the community in which they work

- The use of appropriate technologies

  Lester applauds the use of new technologies as Aboriginal communities seem willing to adapt to new technology.

Providing training to Indigenous Australians in remote and rural communities

Djama and VET (1998) is a report of a collaborative research project involving Batchelor College, the Northern Territory University and the Northern Territory Employment and Training Authority. The aim of the project was to explore partnerships and practices in the delivery of VET in rural and remote Aboriginal communities. VET delivery in remote cross-cultural contexts is complex and involves consideration of community development priorities, factors of distance, isolation, high resource and delivery costs and the need for specific professional development amongst providers who deliver courses.

This project put forward a set of best practice principles for VET delivery with remote Aboriginal communities. The key components of VET delivery in rural and remote Aboriginal communities are:

1. VET delivery is culturally appropriate
2. partnerships are established between providers and Aboriginal client enterprises
3. workplace learning is central
4. training responses are customised so that they are appropriate to Aboriginal training needs through flexible delivery based on workplace learning and networking between providers and Aboriginal enterprises
5. quality student support and learning management systems involve provider/client agreements, workplace learning, on-site and off-site trainers and tutors and interactive communication technologies
6. staff development for providers and clients to support partnership-driven VET which is focussed on workplace learning

These principles are completely interconnected — each depends on the others. They are mutually reinforcing and mutually defining. Therefore they should not be taken independently as stand-alone statements or considered separately from the others.

> *The principles of best practice are a comprehensive, tightly integrated package for framing VET delivery with Aboriginal communities* (p.98).

Why flexible delivery is suited to Indigenous learning

Gude and Pascua-McGlew (1997) report that the advent of the National Training Reform Agenda with its emphasis on open learning and a learner-centred approach suits Aboriginal learning styles. The ways in which it suits Aboriginal learning styles and culture are that it:

- allows students to study together as a group: many students talk of feeling comfortable because they were studying with other Aboriginal people whom they knew and to whom they were often related

  The preference by Aboriginal people for education and training being delivered in their own communities — whether easily identified remote communities or less visible urban communities — appear to be, at least in part, an expression of the need to maintain Aboriginal identity and group unity (Gude & Pascua-McGlew 1997, p.11).

- uses block release concept to allow students to spend time in their own communities and come to intensive classes on campus as a form of block release for one or two weeks
- uses flexible and multiple entry/exit, which allows students to maintain their cultural obligations without disrupting their education
- involves the concept of 'two way' or 'both ways' education which is highly client-centred. This approach involves negotiating the content of the curriculum of a particular course from both mainstream and Indigenous cultural perspectives — for example, ranger training curriculum includes elements of traditional Aboriginal knowledge on land care and Western-science-based conservation knowledge
- uses self-pacing along with the presence of a support worker which allows adult Aboriginal learners control over the pace of their work rather than having the pace externally set
- uses resource-based learning — that is, the use of print and computer-based materials (CD-Rom, Interactive book, telematics, internet) — and this provides more control over the learning process for the student

Student perceptions of their learning experience at the Centre for Indigenous Health Sciences

Page et al. (1997) undertook research to investigate the factors that affect students' academic success, which this group of researchers defined as 'continued participation in the academic program'. The students who participated in the study were all students at the Yooroang Garanga — the Centre for Indigenous Health Sciences at the University of Sydney. The researchers found that the following factors affected the learning experience of the students:

- their newness to study and the newness of the environment
- attitudes of teachers to them
- attitudes of fellow students to them
- attendance patterns
- content — degree of difficulty of reading materials and amount of reading materials; pace of instruction, time allocated to the subject
- teaching and academic support staff — need for adequate contact with teachers during off-campus time, comprehensive and understandable course notes, organised teachers who stuck to the course notes

- timetabling — intensive study program does not leave time for reflection, accessing of resources or working on assignments
- poor quality learning resources
- poor communication flow between staff and students — staff treating different students in different ways
- physical environment — cramped indoor poorly ventilated classrooms not ideal learning setting — outdoor teaching space would be better
- access to telephone important
- family commitments — children, work, pressure from spouses, isolation from family

Aspects of the curriculum that promoted students' study included:

- preparation program to counter the 'newness' factor — done prior to enrolling
- having access to academic support staff
- being welcomed to the school/accommodation and being shown around by former students
- including excursions and field trips in the program
- having teachers who were flexible and could give extensions of time for completing assignments and who minimised use of academic jargon
- use of study groups — promoted cohesion, collaboration among students, decreased anxiety and provided opportunity to share workload. However, certain factors can affect the effective functioning of study groups — for example, geographical distance between students, students' work and family responsibilities and the varying levels of individual student commitment to study

The researchers make the point that:

> *it is clear that the way that students' 'newness' is managed by the institution can have a profound effect on students' study and may have implications for retention* (Page 1997, p.18).

Conclusion

The literature suggests that when researching the question of what contributes to successful outcomes for Indigenous students consideration must be given to underlying factors such as:

- local Indigenous culture and identity
- the approach taken to the equity issue and how 'disadvantage' is interpreted
- the views of researchers on Aboriginal education and the political and social history of the people
- experience and achievements of Indigenous peoples within the school sector
- goals and motivations of Indigenous peoples undertaking VET studies
- what constitutes a 'successful outcome' in VET for Indigenous peoples

Thus outcomes cannot be viewed in isolation — past experiences and future motivations are key factors in identifying outcomes of VET, as is the context — the community understanding and reconciliation with the Indigenous culture.

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In order to answer the question *what institutional factors contribute to successful outcomes for Indigenous students*, this research project aims to find out how the rhetoric is put into practice — how have TAFE institutes made programs accessible, how have these programs been made relevant, how have institutes accommodated and reflected Indigenous cultures and values, what type of support have TAFE institutes provided. In order to do this the research will investigate:

- resourcing issues — such as Aboriginal involvement in design, delivery and assessment of the program, support facilities and programs available, preparation of teaching staff, approach to language and literacy issues
- students' own stories — past educational experiences, motivations for doing the course, help and advice they received
- students' experiences of the learning environment

The research will focus on five underlying themes that come through in the literature as being fundamental to successful outcomes in TAFE for Indigenous students. These are:

- ensuring that VET programs are *accessible* to Indigenous students
- ensuring that available VET programs are *relevant* to the range of needs of Indigenous students
- providing learning experiences that accommodate and *reflect Indigenous cultures* and values
- achieving *outcomes that Indigenous people seek* from their learning experiences
- ensuring *Indigenous participation in decision-making*, especially in planning, developing, delivering and evaluating VET programs for Indigenous students

This will add to the insights reported by Boughton and Durnan (1997) on their study of what constitutes best practice in the Aboriginal community-controlled colleges and will be of importance for the VET sector. In this way all providers will be aware of what institutional structures they need to have in place in order to provide an environment which is supportive of Indigenous peoples' aspirations and motivations for undertaking VET studies and which will contribute to the successful achievement of these aspirations.

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Appendix 3 — Selected statistics

Selected Australian vocational education and training statistics, Indigenous students and all students

Table 1a: The number of Indigenous students and all students in VET in each State and Territory, 1990–1998

State/Territory	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
				Number of Indigenous students ('000)					
NSW	6.2[a]	7.2[a]	6.8[a]	7.8	9.5	9.5	10.9	11.3	13.3
Qld	3.2[a]	4.1	5.2	3.8	3.8	4.9	5.9	10.4	12.1
WA	1.0	1.0	1.1	1.8	2.5	3.5	4.0	5.6	6.2
NT	2.2	2.4	2.9	2.8	2.7	2.6	5.4	5.5	5.7
Vic.	0.8	0.9	1.3	1.7	1.7	2.5	2.9	2.9	3.9
SA	1.4	1.5	2.1	2.4	2.1	2.4	2.3	2.3	2.6
Tas.	0.3	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.4	0.5	0.6	0.8	0.8
ACT	*	0.1	0.1	*	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.2	0.2
Australia	15.1[a]	17.4[a]	19.8[a]	20.6	22.9	26.1	32.3	39.0	44.8
				Total no. of students ('000)					
NSW	310.3	362.3	339.6	348.4	392.0	454.3	487.1	508.8	517.1
Qld	158.3	145.2	173.2	189.7	192.7	194.5	195.0	218.2	260.0
WA	91.9	86.1	79.9	77.5	90.4	109.2	112.6	111.5	115.0
NT	8.8	9.2	11.0	10.7	9.4	11.5	21.2	22.8	19.1
Vic.	249.6	264.0	273.2	316.0	331.9	367.8	396.3	435.9	432.1
SA	93.9	73.5	74.1	72.2	65.2	95.0	99.4	141.6	149.3
Tas.	18.9	16.2	17.8	21.7	19.1	21.7	24.4	26.6	29.0
ACT	17.7	16.2	15.8	15.6	17.2	18.8	18.6	18.7	18.5
Australia	949.4	972.7	984.6	1051.8	1117.9	1272.8	1354.6	1484.1	1540.1

* Less than 50 persons

(a) The number of Indigenous students are not available for NSW prior to 1994. These figures are estimates based on 2% of the total number of VET students in NSW. The number of Indigenous students in Qld was not available for 1990. An estimate based on 2% of VET students in that year was used.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Table 2a: Indigenous students as a proportion of all students in VET in each State and Territory, 1990–1998

	Indigenous students as a proportion of all students (%)								
	1990	1991	1992	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998
NSW	2.0[a]	2.0[a]	2.0[a]	2.2	2.4	2.1	2.2	2.2	2.6
Qld	2.0[a]	2.8	3.0	2.0	2.0	2.5	3.0	4.8	4.6
WA	1.1	1.2	1.4	2.3	2.7	3.2	3.6	5.0	5.4
NT	25.1	26.4	26.2	25.9	28.9	22.9	25.3	24.1	29.9
Vic.	0.3	0.3	0.5	0.5	0.5	0.7	0.7	0.7	0.9
SA	1.5	2.0	2.9	3.3	3.2	2.5	2.3	1.6	1.8
Tas.	1.4	1.1	1.6	1.5	2.1	2.3	2.6	3.0	2.7
ACT	0.2	0.6	0.5	0.2	1.0	1.1	1.3	1.3	1.1
Australia	1.6[a]	1.8[a]	2.0[a]	2.0	2.0	2.1	2.4	2.6	2.9

* Less than 50 persons.

(a) The numbers of Indigenous students are not available for NSW prior to 1994. These figures are estimates based on 2% of the total number of VET students in NSW. The number of Indigenous students in Qld in 1990 was not available. An estimate based on 2% of the total number of VET students in Qld was used for that year.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 3a: Gender of Indigenous students and all students[a]

Gender	1996	1997	1998
	No. of Indigenous students ('000)		
Males	16.3	20.3	23.7
Females	16.0	18.2	20.7
All persons	32.3	38.5	44.4
	Proportion of Indigenous students (%)		
Males	50.5	52.8	53.4
Females	49.5	47.2	46.6
All persons	100.0	100.0	100.0
	Proportion of all students (%)		
Males	52.5	52.0	51.6
Females	47.4	48.0	48.4
All persons	100.0	100.0	100.0

(a) Students where gender is not known have been proportionally allocated to one gender or the other.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 4a: The number of Indigenous students by age

	No. of Indigenous students ('000)		
Age (years)	**1996**	**1997**	**1998**
14 and under	0.4	0.5	0.8
15–19	7.2	8.5	10.5
20–24	5.9	6.9	7.6
25–29	4.7	5.5	6.3
30–39	7.1	8.1	9.6
40–49	3.6	4.4	5.3
50–59	1.3	1.6	1.9
60–64	0.2	0.3	0.3
65 and over	0.2	0.2	0.2
Age not known	1.7	2.5	2.0
Total	**32.3**	**38.5**	**44.5**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 5a: The age structure of the Indigenous students and all students, 1998

	Proportion (%)	
Age[a] Years	**Indigenous students**	**All students**
14 or under	1.9	0.5
15–19	24.7	21.4
20–24	17.9	16.9
25–29	14.8	12.6
30–34	22.5	21.7
40–49	12.5	16.6
50–59	4.4	7.6
60–64	0.7	1.3
65 and over	0.6	1.4
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) The 'not knowns' have been apportioned proportionately to all other age groups.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 6a: Schooling background of Indigenous students and all students

Highest year of schooling	**Indigenous students**			**All students**
	1996	**1997**	**1998**	**1998**
	No. of students ('000)			
Year 9 or lower	9.0	10.2	11.3	109.7
Year 10	8.8	11.4	13.1	286.7
Year 11	3.2	3.9	4.9	160.2
Year 12	3.9	5.2	6.3	464.4
Not stated	7.4	7.8	8.8	514.1
Total	**32.3**	**38.5**	**44.4**	**1535.2**
	Proportion of students (%)			
Year 9 or lower	27.9	26.5	25.5	7.1
Year 10	27.1	29.5	29.5	18.7
Year 11	10.0	10.1	10.9	10.4
Year 12	12.2	13.6	14.1	30.3
Not stated	22.8	20.3	19.9	33.5
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education

Table 7a: Prior qualifications completed by Indigenous students and all students

Prior qualification completed	**Indigenous students**			**All students**
	1996	**1997**	**1998**	**1998**
	No. of students ('000)			
Trade certificate	0.7	1.4	1.6	96.5
Advanced technical certificate	0.2	0.3	0.4	32.3
Other certificate	2.0	3.9	4.5	145.2
Associate diploma	0.2	0.5	0.6	35.1
Undergraduate diploma	0.1	0.2	0.2	16.9
Degree/postgraduate diploma	0.2	0.5	0.6	67.5
Unspecified qualification	0.1	0.8	1.1	46.6
Total with qualifications	3.5	7.6	9.0	440.1
Total students in VET	**32.3**	**38.5**	**44.4**	**1535.2**
Proportion of students (%)				
Trade certificate	20.2	18.8	18.6	21.9
Advanced technical certificate	5.0	4.6	4.1	7.3
Other certificate	58.1	51.7	50.3	33.0
Associate diploma	5.9	5.9	6.2	8.0
Undergraduate diploma	2.3	2.3	2.4	3.8
Degree/postgraduate diploma	6.0	5.9	6.3	15.3
Unspecified qualifications	2.5	10.8	12.0	10.6
Total with qualifications	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Table 8a: The labour force status of Indigenous students and all students, 1997

	Indigenous students							All students
	Capital cities	Other metro-politan	Rural	Remote	Outside Australia	Location not stated	All Indigenous students	
				No. of students ('000)				
Employed	3.9	0.8	5.8	3.6	*	0.1	14.1	737.6
Unemployed	2.6	0.7	4.6	1.6	*	*	9.6	213.1
Not in the labour force	2.2	0.4	3.1	1.2	*	*	7.0	154.8
Total	8.7	2.0	13.5	6.4	*	0.1	30.7	
Labour force status not known	2.0	0.2	1.8	3.5	*	0.3	7.8	430.6
Total students	**10.6**	**2.2**	**15.2**	**9.8**	*	**0.4**	**38.5**	**1535.2**
				Proportion of students				
Employed	44.7	41.9	42.8	55.8	na	53.0	46.0	66.7
Unemployed	30.5	36.5	34.1	24.7	na	17.9	31.2	19.3
Not in the labour force	24.8	21.6	23.1	19.5	na	29.1	22.8	14.0
Total[a]	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**na**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* Less than 50 persons.

(a) Excludes those whose labour force status is not known.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 9a: Geographic region of Indigenous students and all students

Geographic region	Indigenous students			All students
	1996	1997	1998	1998
		No. of students ('000)		
Capital city[a]	9.1	10.6	12.8	855.5
Other metropolitan[b]	1.9	2.2	2.8	104.2
Rural[c]	12.7	15.3	17.2	442.0
Remote[d]	8.3	9.9	10.7	52.1
Outside Australia	*	*	*	15.6
Not stated	0.3	0.5	0.9	65.8
Total	**32.3**	**38.5**	**44.4**	**1535.2**
		Proportion of students (%)		
Capital city[a]	28.1	27.6	28.8	55.7
Other metropolitan[b]	6.0	5.8	6.4	6.8
Rural[c]	39.2	39.7	38.7	28.8
Remote[d]	25.7	25.7	24.1	3.4
Outside Australia	0.0	0.1	0.0	1.0
Not stated	0.9	1.2	1.9	4.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

* Less than 50 persons.

(a) Capital cities are Sydney, Melbourne, Brisbane, Adelaide, Perth, Hobart, Darwin and Canberra.

(b) Other metropolitan refers to urban centres other than capital cities with 100 000 people or more.

(c) Rural is defined as centres of between 5000 and 99 000.

(d) Remote are isolated communities of less than 5000 people.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 10a: Module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students

Student category	No. of students ('000)		Proportion of students (%)	
	1996	1998	1996	1998
Indigenous students	260.2	375.0	3.1	3.5
All students	8474.8	10706.1	100.0	100.0

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (1998) and unpublished data compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 11a: The number of hours of training in the modules undertaken by Indigenous students and all students

Annual hours of training	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of modules ('000)		
1–20 hours	113.3	190.6	5759.5
21–40 hours	76.1	9.1	224.0
41–80 hours	55.3	111.3	3117.8
81–100 hours	4.9	56.6	1449.1
More than 100 hours	10.6	6.5	91.4
Total	**260.2**	**374.1**	**10641.8**
	Proportion of modules (%)		
1–20 hours	43.6	51.0	54.1
21–40 hours	29.3	2.4	2.1
41–80 hours	21.3	29.7	29.3
81–100 hours	1.9	15.1	13.6
More than 100 hours	4.1	1.7	0.9
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 12a: The number of Indigenous students and all students by field of study enrolled in courses

Field of study	Indigenous students ('000)			All students ('000)
	1996	1997	1998	1998
Land and marine resources, animal husbandry	2.9	3.3	4.1	105.4
Architecture and building	2.3	2.1	2.5	89.2
Arts, humanities and social sciences	4.2	5.3	6.5	119.9
Business, administration and economics	5.7	6.0	7.4	356.1
Education	0.9	1.4	1.8	41.7
Engineering and surveying	2.9	3.5	4.8	248.9
Health and community services	3.9	4.2	5.6	149.0
Law and legal studies	0.1	0.2	0.2	10.7
Sciences	0.8	1.1	1.2	124.9
Veterinary science and animal care	*	*	*	2.9
Services, hospitality and transportation	2.7	3.4	4.3	203.9
TAFE multi-field education	16.3	16.0	19.0	330.3
Net total[a]	**32.3**	**39.0**	**44.8**	**1540.1**

* Less than 50 persons.

(a) The totals summed from each field of study exceed the total number of students because some students are enrolled in more than one field.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Table 13a: Proportion of Indigenous students and all students enrolled in courses in each field of study

Field of study	Indigenous students (%)			All students (%)
	1996	1997	1998	1998
Land and marine resources, animal husbandry	6.8	7.0	7.1	5.9
Architecture and building	5.4	4.4	4.3	5.0
Arts, humanities and social sciences	9.9	11.4	11.2	6.7
Business, administration and economics	13.3	13.0	12.9	20.0
Education	2.3	3.1	3.1	2.3
Engineering and surveying	6.8	7.6	8.5	14.0
Health and community services	9.0	9.0	9.8	8.4
Law and legal studies	0.2	0.3	0.3	0.6
Science	1.9	2.3	2.1	7.0
Veterinary science and animal care	0	0	0.1	0.2
Services, hospitality and transportation	6.3	7.4	7.6	11.4
TAFE multi-field education	38.1	34.4	33.0	18.5
Total[(a)]	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) Includes enrolments in more than one field of study.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 14a: Stream of study of courses undertaken by Indigenous students and all students

Stream of study	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of students ('000)		
Preparatory	15.3	20.9	405.5
Operative	8.1	9.9	369.3
Trades/skilled	14.6	22.8	783.2
Professional/para-professional	2.5	3.8	224.8
Total[(a)]	**40.5**	**57.4**	**1782.8**
	Proportion of students (%)		
Preparatory	37.8	34.5	22.8
Operative	20.0	17.2	20.7
Trades/skilled	36.0	39.6	43.9
Professional/para-professional	6.2	6.7	12.6
Total[(a)]	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) Includes students taking programs in more than one stream of study.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 15a: Module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students by stream of study

Stream of study	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of students ('000)		
Preparatory	82.5	100.1	1262.6
Operative	45.5	60.4	1413.0
Trades/skilled	112.5	181.7	5830.9
Professional/para-professional	19.7	31.4	2164.6
Enrolments not associated with a course/stream	*	1.4	35.0
Total	**260.2**	**375.0**	**10706.1**
	Proportion of students		
Preparatory	31.7	26.7	11.8
Operative	17.5	16.1	13.2
Trades/skilled	43.2	48.5	54.5
Professional/para-professional	7.6	8.4	20.2
Enrolments not associated with a course/stream	0.0	0.3	0.3
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

*Less than 50 persons.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 16a: Qualifications of courses enrolled in by Indigenous students and all students

Qualification category	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of students ('000)		
Diploma and associate diplomas	2.5	3.0	221.0
AQF Certificate IV and equivalent	2.3	3.8	173.4
AQF Certificate III and equivalent	4.0	7.9	308.7
AQF Certificate I, II	7.1	21.8	375.6
and similar secondary certificate not elsewhere classified	17.3	8.0	115.7
Other[a]	16.7	17.6	742.2
Total[b]	**49.9**	**62.1**	**1936.6**
	Proportion of students (%)		
Diploma and associate diplomas	5.0	4.8	11.4
AQF Certificate IV and equivalent	4.6	6.1	9.0
AQF Certificate III and equivalent	8.1	12.8	15.9
AQF Certificate I, II	14.3	35.1	19.4
and similar secondary certificate not elsewhere classified	34.7	12.8	6.0
Other[a]	33.3	28.4	38.3
Total[b]	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) Other includes enrolments in non-award courses or those leading to statements/certificates of competency, proficiency, attainment etc.

(b) Includes students enrolled in courses leading to more than one qualification.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 17a: The number of module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students by delivery strategy

Qualification category	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of module enrolments ('000)		
Local class—scheduled teacher directed	140.6	254.4	8293.7
Remote class—scheduled teacher directed	4.5	8.3	87.5
Self-paced learning—scheduled local class organisation	14.7	13.2	497.1
Self-paced learning—unscheduled multiple options	2.7	7.8	151.2
External—correspondence	3.8	15.5	424.5
	(.7)		
Workplace learning	0.7	6.9	214.2
			(.1)
Mixed delivery	8.2	32.8	560.5
Other	3.2	24.1	413.4
Sub-total	178.3	363.0	10642.1
Learning mode not stated	81.9	12.0	64.0
Total	**260.2**	**375.0**	**10706.1**
	Proportion of module enrolments (%)		
Local class—scheduled teacher directed	78.9	70.1	77.9
Remote class—scheduled teacher directed	2.5	2.3	0.8
Self-paced learning—scheduled local class organisation	8.2	3.6	4.7
Self-paced learning—unscheduled multiple options	1.5	2.2	1.4
External—correspondence	2.1	4.3	4.0
Workplace learning	0.4	1.9	2.0
Mixed delivery	4.6	9.0	5.3
Other	1.8	6.7	3.9
Total where learning mode stated	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research (1998) and unpublished data compiled by the National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Table 18a: Types of training provider attended by Indigenous students and all VET students

Provider type	Indigenous students		All students
	1996	1998	1998
	No. of students ('000)		
TAFE and other government	28.5	35.7	1150.6
Community education providers	1.0	2.1	233.8
Other registered providers	2.8	6.6	150.8
Total	**32.3**	**44.4**	**1535.2**
	Proportion of students (%)		
TAFE and other government	88.2	80.5	75.0
Community education providers	3.0	4.7	15.2
Other registered providers	8.8	14.9	9.8
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 19a: The apprentice and trainee commencements of Indigenous peoples and all people by gender and age, 1998

Provider type	The no. of people commencing in contracts of training		Indigenous as a proportion of total (%) 1998
	Indigenous ('000)	All commencements ('000)	
Gender			
Males	2.5	86.8	2.9
Females	1.8	61.0	2.9
Total	**4.3**	**147.8**	**2.9**
Age			
Less than 15 years	*	0.1	2.0
15–19 years	1.2	60.4	2.0
20–24 years	1.1	34.9	3.1
25 years or more	2.0	52.4	3.8
All ages	**4.3**	**147.8**	**2.9**

* Less than 50 persons.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 20a: The total number of Indigenous and all apprentices and trainees in a contract of training by gender and age, 1998

Characteristics	The no. of people in contracts of training		Indigenous as a proportion of total (%) 1998
	Indigenous ('000)	All contracts of training ('000)	
Gender			
Males	2.7	155.3	1.7
Females	1.5	64.5	2.3
Total	**4.2**	**219.8**	**1.9**
Age			
Less than 15 years	*	*	2.7
15–19 years	0.9	66.7	1.4
20–24 years	1.3	92.0	1.4
25 years or more	2.0	61.1	3.2
All ages	**4.2**	**219.8**	**1.9**

* Less than 50 persons.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 21a: Indigenous and all apprentices and trainees by occupation, 1998

Occupational category	Commencements			No. in training		
	Proportion in each occupation		Indigenous as a proportion of all apprentices and trainees (%)	Proportion in each occupation		Indigenous as a proportion of all apprentices and trainees (%)
	Indigenous (%)	All people (%)		Indigenous (%)	All people (%)	
Managers and administrators	0.9	1.3	2.1	0.7	1.1	1.3
Professionals	6.7	0.8	24.1	4.9	0.6	15.0
Associate professionals	3.9	4.7	2.4	3.5	3.0	2.2
Mechanical and fabrication engineers	1.3	4.2	0.9	3.9	9.2	0.8
Automative tradespersons	1.6	4.6	1.0	3.6	10.3	0.7
Electrical and electronic trades	1.9	3.7	1.5	3.3	7.7	0.8
Construction tradespersons	4.7	6.7	2.1	9.9	11.5	1.6
Food tradespersons	2.3	5.9	1.1	3.7	8.9	0.8
Skilled agricultural and horticultural	1.6	0.9	5.3	2.2	1.6	2.6
Hairdressers	1.0	2.6	1.2	2.2	4.4	1.0
Other tradespersons and related workers nei	2.0	2.4	2.5	2.3	4.1	1.1
Advanced clerical and service workers	2.2	0.2	27.6	1.3	0.1	30.4
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	39.1	31.9	3.6	31.9	18.8	3.2
Intermediate production and transport workers	2.5	3.1	2.3	2.6	2.0	2.5
Elementary clerical sales and service workers	8.6	14.7	1.7	7.2	8.7	1.6
Labourers and related workers	19.7	12.3	4.6	16.8	8.0	4.0
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**2.9**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**1.9**

nei – not elsewhere identified

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 22a: Indigenous and all apprentices and trainees by level of qualification being sought, 1998

Level of qualification	Proportion seeking level of qualification		Indigenous as a proprotion of all apprentices and trainees (%)
	Indigenous (%)	All people (%)	
Commencements			
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	0.0	0.1	0.0
Certificate IV or equivalent	0.9	4.5	0.6
Certificate III or equivalent	31.5	51.9	1.8
Certificate II or equivalent	63.4	39.4	4.7
Certificate I or equivalent	1.5	2.7	1.6
Qualification level not known	2.7	1.4	5.6
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**2.9**
No. in training			
Advanced Diploma or Diploma	0.0	0.1	0.0
Certificate IV or equivalent	1.0	2.9	0.7
Certificate III or equivalent	42.1	60.1	1.3
Certificate II or equivalent	48.4	23.6	3.9
Certificate I or equivalent	2.7	8.0	0.6
Qualification level not known	5.8	5.3	2.1
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**2.9**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 23a: Outcomes from module enrolments of Indigenous students and all students 1998 (expressed as a percentage of total enrolments)

Category of student	Student assessed			Withdrew			Student not assessed		Status granted through		Not stated	Total
	Passed	Failed	Results withheld	With failure	Without failure	And transferred	Completed hours	Continuing	RPL	Credit transfer		
Males												
Indigenous	49.1	13.7	0.7	7.1	5.4	0.1	4.3	12.0	0.7	1.1	6.0	100.0
All students	59.3	8.8	0.5	4.4	3.2	0.1	4.6	8.1	2.7	3.3	5.0	100.0
Females												
Indigenous	48.7	12.2	0.9	8.0	6.2	0.1	3.8	10.9	1.3	2.1	5.8	100.0
All students	59.4	6.4	0.5	5.0	3.6	0.1	4.9	8.1	2.4	3.3	6.2	100.0
All persons												
Indigenous	48.9	13.0	0.8	7.6	5.8	0.1	4.0	11.4	1.0	1.6	5.9	100.0
All students	59.2	7.6	0.5	4.7	3.3	0.1	4.8	8.1	2.6	3.3	5.9	100.0

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 24a: The education outcomes of Indigenous students by age, 1998

Education outcome	15–19 years	20–24 years	25–39 years	40 years and over	All ages
Indigenous students					
Module pass rate	47.1	47.6	49.4	53.3	48.9
Module fail rate	16.8	12.6	11.6	10.4	13.0
Module withdrawal rate	14.0	13.9	14.1	11.5	13.5
Continuing module enrolment rate	11.8	12.3	11.3	9.7	11.4
Net pass rate	73.9	79.0	80.9	83.6	79.0
All students					
Module pass rate	63.2	60.5	57.7	55.3	59.2
Module fail rate	9.4	8.4	6.3	5.6	7.6
Module withdrawal rate	7.5	8.8	9.0	7.5	8.1
Continuing module enrolment rate	9.5	7.3	7.5	7.5	8.1
Net pass rate	87.0	87.8	90.2	90.8	88.6

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 25a: Outcomes from module enrolments by stream of study by Indigenous students and all students, 1998 (expressed as a percentage of total enrolments)

Category of student	Student assessed			Withdrew			Students not assessed		Status granted through		Not stated	Total
	Passed	Failed	Results withheld	With failure	Without failure	And transferred	Completed hours	Continuing	RPL	Credit transfer		
Preparatory												
Indigenous	39.2	16.3	1.0	9.1	6.9	0.1	10.2	8.2	0.3	0.6	8.3	100.0
All students	41.6	8.4	0.5	7.3	4.7	0.1	20.9	5.0	0.7	0.4	10.4	100.0
Operative												
Indigenous	49.6	9.2	0.5	11.0	6.3	0.0	3.1	13.4	1.0	1.3	4.7	100.0
All students	56.0	3.9	0.3	5.7	2.7	0.0	8.1	11.8	1.5	2.2	7.7	100.0
Trades/skilled												
Indigenous	52.4	12.0	0.9	6.0	5.5	0.2	1.3	13.1	1.2	1.8	5.8	100.0
All students	62.6	7.3	0.6	3.9	3.2	0.1	1.9	9.5	2.6	2.7	5.6	100.0
Professional/para-professional												
Indigenous	58.2	15.2	0.2	5.3	3.0	0.1	1.6	8.8	2.0	4.4	1.1	100.0
All students	63.0	10.4	0.4	4.6	3.3	0.1	0.9	4.0	4.3	7.2	1.6	100.0

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Table 26a: Qualifications completed by graduates from TAFE programs of at least 200 hours or one semester in duration

Qualifications completed[a]	Indigenous students (%)		Non-Indigenous students (%)	
	1996	1997	1996	1997
Diploma and higher	9.1	10.1	18.0	18.9
Adv. Cert. post trade and other/AQF IV	12.4	11.5	17.4	18.7
AQF Certificate III/Certificate trade	15.4	22.2	22.5	28.5
Certificate other	44.1	21.6	26.2	15.7
AQF Cert II and AQF Cert I	19.0	34.8	15.8	18.2
Total	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**	**100.0**

(a) Qualifications completed by graduates from TAFE programs of at least 200 hours or one semester in duration. Derived from the NCVER Graduate Destination Survey.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 27a: Apprentice and trainee completions by age and gender, 1998

Category	Indigenous completions		Total completions	
	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)
Gender				
Male	0.8	59.3	36.1	65.5
Female	0.6	40.7	19.0	34.5
Persons	1.4	100.0	55.1	100.0
Age				
15–19 years	0.2	14.9	8.1	14.7
20–24 years	0.4	30.7	31.7	57.5
25 years or more	0.8	54.4	15.3	27.8
All ages	**1.4**	**100.0**	**55.1**	**100.0**

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 28a: The occupational category of apprentice and trainee completions, 1998

Occupational category	Indigenous completions		Total completions	
	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)
Managers and administrators	*	*	1.1	2.0
Professionals	0.1	7.1	0.5	0.9
Associate professionals	0.1	7.1	2.6	4.7
Mechanical and fabrication engineers	*	*	4.8	8.8
Automotive tradespersons	*	*	4.8	8.8
Electrical and electronics trades	*	*	3.4	6.2
Building and construction tradespersons	0.1	7.1	5.8	10.6
Food tradespersons	*	*	2.7	4.9
Skilled agricultural and horticultural	*	*	0.7	1.3
Hairdressors	*	*	2.0	3.6
Other tradespersons	*	*	2.2	4.0
Advanced clerical and service workers	*	*	0.1	0.2
Intermediate clerical, sales and service workers	0.6	42.9	14.8	26.4
Intermediate production and transport workers	*	*	1.0	1.8
Elementary clerical, sales and service workers	0.1	7.1	4.1	7.5
Labourers and related workers	0.3	21.5	4.5	8.3
Total	**1.4**	**100.0**	**55.1**	**100.0**

* Less than 50 persons.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

Table 29a: The qualifications gained by those completing apprenticeships and traineeships, 1998

Category	Indigenous completions		Total completions	
	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)	No. ('000)	Proportion (%)
Certificate I	0.1	6.4	7.2	13.2
Certificate II	0.9	62.5	17.7	32.2
Certificate III	0.3	19.1	25.3	45.9
Certificate IV	*	0.2	0.6	1.0
Diploma	0.0	0.0	*	0.1
Advanced Diploma	0.0	0.0	0.0	0.0
Qualification not stated	0.1	11.8	4.3	7.6
Total	**1.4**	**100.0**	**55.1**	**100.0**

* Less than 50 persons.

Source: National Centre for Vocational Education Research

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Appendix 4 — Student surveys

Results of a survey of Indigenous students

The fieldwork team administered a small survey of Indigenous TAFE students in order to gauge some further information about:

- the background of Indigenous TAFE students
- the nature of their training/learning experiences in TAFE
- the perspectives of students about the quality of their VET experience, including their level of satisfaction with VET and any views they have about improvements

The survey was administered through Indigenous education units in eight of the 16 TAFE institutes participating in this study. There were 201 respondents, although not every respondent answered every question. The results are shown below, together with the number of respondents who answered each question.

This survey was not designed to be representative of all Indigenous students in VET, nor was it designed to be representative of Indigenous students participating in special Indigenous programs conducted by Indigenous/ Aboriginal education units in TAFE institutes. Because it was administered through Indigenous education units, the respondents are mostly participants in at least some of such programs. However, the survey was merely designed to gauge some information from the Indigenous student's perspective.

Percentages and totals based on number of respondents per question

Overall number of valid respondents totalled 201

Question	Results as a %
1 How old are you?	
15 – 19	24.1%
20 – 24	15.6%
25 – 29	13.6 %
30 – 34	10.6%
35 – 39	13.6%
40 – 49	14.1%
over 50	8.5%
Total no. of respondents – 199	

Question	Results as a %
2 When did you leave school?	
1946 – 1955	3.9%
1956 – 1965	5.5%
1966 – 1975	11.0%
1976 – 1985	21.3%
1986 – 1995	28.3%
1996 – 1999	29.9%
Total no. of respondents – 127	
3 What is the highest year of school you completed?	
Less than year 9	30.8%
Year 10	32.8%
Year 11	14.6%
Year 12	21.7%
Total no. of respondents – 198	
4(a) How many courses have you successfully completed?	
One	58.3%
Two	21.4%
Three	14.6%
Four	3.9%
Five	1.9%
Total no. of respondents – 103	
4(b) What was the average length of courses completed?	
Less than one year	23.4%
One year	46.9%
One ½ years	2.4%
Two years	11.1%
More than two years	16.0%
Total no. of respondents – 81	
5(a) How many modules have you successfully completed?	
One	50.7%
Two	16.0%
Three	16.0%
Four	13.3%
Five	2.7%
More than five	1.3%
Total no. of respondents – 75	
5(b) What was the average length of modules completed?	
Less than one year	14.3%
One year	50.8%
One ½ years	7.9%
Two years	17.5%
More than two years	9.5%
Total no. of respondents – 63	
6(a) How many courses are you currently enrolled in?	
One	87.1%
Two	5.3%
Three	2.9%
Four	2.4%
Five	1.2%
Six	1.2%
Total no. of respondents – 170	

Question	Results as a %
6(b) What is the average length of the course you are currently enrolled in?	
Less than one year	19.2%
One year	50.3%
One-and-a-half years	4.2%
Two years	9.0%
More than two years	17.4%
Total no. of respondents – 167	
7 How many modules are you currently enrolled in?	
One	20.0%
Two	1.5%
Three	3.1%
Four	3.8%
Five	33.8%
More than five	37.7%
Total no. of respondents – 130	
8 Did you receive any help/advice in choosing the course/modules that you are currently studying?	
Yes	50.0%
No	50.0%
Total no. of respondents – 166	
9 Who gave you this help/advice?	
Aboriginal support unit staff	32.1%
Family member	43.2%
Community member	11.1%
Other	18.5%
(multiple response)	
Total no. of respondents – 81	
10 Where are you living while you are doing this study?	
With my family in my community	47.1%
With family members in the town where the college is	30.6%
Living away from my community but I am with friends	10.8%
Living alone and I am away from my community	11.5%
Total no. of respondents – 157	
11 What language do you generally speak at home, with your friends and family?	
English	86.7%
Indigenous language	.6%
Both	12.7%
Total no. of respondents – 165	
12 Where do you do most of your training/learning?	
In class	81.1%
At work	2.9%
In class and at work	13.1%
In class and in my community	17.7%
By external study or self-paced learning	3.4%
Other	2.3%
Total no. of respondents – 175	

Question	Results as a %
13 What style of teaching/training are you currently experiencing?	
Practical demonstrations	
Mostly	53.3%
Sometimes	37.4%
Never	9.3%
Total no. of respondents – 107	
Practical activities	
Mostly	49.1%
Sometimes	44.8%
Never	6.0%
Total no. of respondents – 116	
Discussions and group activities	
Mostly	67.9%
Sometimes	26.1%
Never	6.0%
Total no. of respondents – 134	
Workbook-based activities	
Mostly	54.5%
Sometimes	33.3%
Never	12.2%
Total no. of respondents – 123	
Computer-based exercises	
Mostly	35.5%
Sometimes	33.6%
Never	30.8%
Total no. of respondents – 107	
Practical projects and assignments	
Mostly	46.0%
Sometimes	38.1%
Never	15.9%
Total no. of respondents – 113	
Written projects and assignments	
Mostly	43.5%
Sometimes	39.1%
Never	17.4%
Total no. of respondents – 115	
Other	
Mostly	46.4%
Sometimes	21.4%
Never	32.1%
Total no. of respondents – 28	
14 Does the style of teaching/training that the teacher/s mostly use suit you?	
Yes	95.6%
No	4.4%
Total no. of respondents – 180	

Question	Results as a %
15 How does your teacher/trainer assess your skills and knowledge?	
By giving us written tests/exams	
Mostly	43.1%
Sometimes	31.2%
Never	25.7%
Total no. of respondents – 109	
By giving us practical projects	
Mostly	52.2%
Sometimes	35.7%
Never	12.2%
Total no. of respondents – 115	
By asking us questions and discussing our answers	
Mostly	70.2%
Sometimes	23.4%
Never	6.5%
Total no. of respondents – 124	
By asking us to put together examples of our work	
Mostly	47.8%
Sometimes	42.6%
Never	9.6%
Total no. of respondents – 115	
By coming to work and observing the work I do	
Mostly	41.0%
Sometimes	28.6%
Never	30.5%
Total no. of respondents – 105	
Other	
Mostly	18.8%
Sometimes	18.8%
Never	62.5%
Total no. of respondents – 16	
16 Do you attend class regularly?	
Yes	97.7%
No	2.3%
Total no. of respondents – 177	
17 Do you find your teachers/trainers spend enough time with you covering all the topics that need to be covered?	
Yes	91.4%
No	8.6%
Total no. of respondents – 74	
18 What kind of materials/resources have you received in the modules you are studying?	
Generally print-based materials	
Yes	93.5%
No	6.5%
Total no. of respondents – 153	
Some computer-based materials	
Yes	29.1%
No	70.9%
Total no. of respondents – 151	
Some audio-visual materials (tapes/videos)	
Yes	39.1%
No	60.9%
Total no. of respondents – 151	

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Question	Results as a %
19 Do you find the materials you are given easy to understand and use?	
Difficult to use and understand	22.5%
Easy to use and understand	77.4%
Total no. of respondents – 164	
20 How do you measure success in your learning?	
By gaining the qualification/certificate	
Very important	88.0%
Somewhat important	6.4%
Not so important	5.7%
Total no. of respondents – 141	
By getting a high grade	
Very important	66.2%
Somewhat important	14.2%
Not so important	19.7%
Total no. of respondents – 112	
By taking what I learn back to my community	
Very important	70%
Somewhat important	18.2%
Not so important	11.9%
Total no. of respondents – 10	
By being able to share my knowledge with others	
Very important	70.1%
Somewhat important	24.4%
Not so important	5.5%
Total no. of respondents – 127	
By completing the module	
Very important	74.2%
Somewhat important	15.8%
Not so important	10.0%
Total no. of respondents – 120	
By my increased sense of confidence in myself	
Very important	76.8%
Somewhat important	13.2%
Not so important	10.1%
Total no. of respondents – 129	
Other	
Very important	38.2%
Somewhat important	8.8%
Not so important	53.0%
Total no. of respondents – 34	
21 What kind of support did you need in order to complete your studies successfully?	
Extra classes/tuition in language, literacy, numeracy	
Yes	22.2%
No	77.8%
Total no. of respondents – 135	
Extra time to complete projects/assessments	
Yes	33.8%
No	66.2%
Total no. of respondents – 136	
Extra time with the teacher to understand the subject	
Yes	38.5%
No	61.5%
Total no. of respondents – 135	
Guidance and support from people in my community	
Yes	32.1%
No	67.9%
Total no. of respondents – 134	

Question	Results as a %
Guidance and support from staff in the Aboriginal support unit at the college	
Yes	42.5%
No	57.5%
Total no. of respondents – 134	
Other	
Yes	9.2%
No	90.8%
Total no. of respondents – 131	
22 Did you get this kind of support?	
Yes	90.2%
No	9.8%
Total no. of respondents – 22	

The National Centre for Vocational Education Research is Australia's primary research and development organisation in the field of vocational education and training.

NCVER undertakes and manages research programs and monitors the performance of Australia's training system.

NCVER provides a range of information aimed at improving the quality of training at all levels.

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